DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 374 450 CS 214 526

AUTHOR Higgins, Lorraine; Flower, Linda
TITLE Negotiating Competing Schemas for Discourse: A Framework and Study of Argument Construction. The Writing of Arguments across Diverse Contexts. Study 2. Final Report.
INSTITUTION National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy, Berkeley, CA.; National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy, Pittsburgh, PA.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Sep 94
CONTRACT R117G10036
NOTE 63p.; For Study 3, see CS 214 527.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Higher Education; Individual Differences; *Persuasive Discourse; Prior Learning; Social Problems; Undergraduate Students; *Writing Processes; Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS Controversial Topics; Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh); Rhetorical Strategies; *Writing Contexts

ABSTRACT

A study described college student writers as they constructed arguments, creating a picture of school-based argument drawn not from ideal models of arguments as envisioned by educators, but from experiences of students themselves. A three-part framework that synthesizes rhetorical perspectives on argument with a social-cognitive view of the writing process serves as the basis for the description of both larger patterns as well as individual differences in argument. Subjects, nine female students (ages 18-36) enrolled in a developmental English course (part of a college reentry program in an inner-city Pittsburgh campus of a community college), wrote six essays summarizing, responding to, synthesizing, and arguing about issues of racism and prejudice based on an interview with a former Klansman and three articles on the social and psychological causes of racism and prejudice. Subjects' writing portfolios were evaluated. Results indicated that the influential features of the argument situation were not limited to social cues and material resources but also the writer's prior knowledge, values, cultural experience, and personal goals. Results also indicated that: (1) the degree to which writers must construct knowledge via strategies of selecting, connecting, and organizing claims and evidence was never entirely predictable; (2) the students had difficulty translating and managing personal knowledge when putting their arguments on paper; and (3) a great deal of metacognitive knowledge hard to capture with texts or protocols came into view when the students were asked to reflect on their goals, strategies, and conflicts. (Contains 74 references and 9 figures of data. Interview questions are attached. (RS)

FINAL REPORT

THE WRITING OF ARGUMENTS ACROSS DIVERSE CONTEXTS

Study 2
Negotiating Competing Schemas for Discourse: A Framework and Study of Argument Construction

Lorraine Higgins and Linda Flower

Carnegie Mellon University

September, 1994

Project Director: Linda Flower

NOTE: The research reported herein was supported under the Educational Research and Development Center Program (Grant No. R117G10036 for the National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy) as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed in this report do not reflect the position or policies of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement or the U.S. Department of Education.

FINAL REPORT

NEGOTIATING COMPETING SCHEMAS FOR DISCOURSE:

A FRAMEWORK AND STUDY OF ARGUMENT CONSTRUCTION

Lorraine Higgins and Linda Flower
Carnegie Mellon University

September, 1994

Argumentation theorists today describe argument as a rich concept that can embrace many different meanings. Argument can be understood and studied as a product, a procedure, a process, and a larger social practice within society (O'Keefe, 1977; McKerrow, 1989). This means that any study of argumentation must begin with a statement about those particular aspects of argument it seeks to understand.

The framework and study presented here focus on the process by which individuals construct arguments, with an emphasis on the writing of arguments. Here, argument is defined as a complex, problem-solving process whereby individuals use reasoning to resolve potential dispute surrounding open questions, questions for which there are no immediate, testable answers but a number of probable responses that might be reached through the use of rhetoric. Our descriptive orientation, in contrast to the normative approach of formal logic (e.g., Boole, 1951), attempts to describe the means by which an arguer creates a claim and develops reasons for that claim. We recognize that everyday acts of argument are not accurately described by rules and procedures of formal logic (Wasson & Johnson-Laird, 1972), but are instead shaped in response to rhetorical situations.

In part one of this paper, we present a three-part framework that synthesizes rhetorical perspectives on argument with a social-cognitive view of the writing process. The power of this framework is its ability to acknowledge and define the relationship between the personal, social, and material resources for arguing as well as the individual decision-making processes that shape how data, warrants, and claims are constructed. In part two, the framework becomes the basis of a study describing both larger patterns as well as individual differences in argument that appear in a college classroom.

PART I.
ARGUMENT AS CONSTRUCTION: A THREE-PART FRAMEWORK

Our first task in developing a framework for argument construction is to clarify what we mean by an argument situation and to recognize the ways in which a situation might be relevant to the reasoning process of an individual arguer.

Argument Situations: Rhetorical Perspectives

The concept of an argument situation played a key role in classical theories of rhetoric, born out of the social exigencies of ancient Greece and Rome. As an alternative

to public coercion through violence or tyranny, argument became a key instrument in settling legal disputes, deliberating political issues, and influencing public opinion. Training in rhetoric permeated Greek and Roman education, and early theories of argumentation were documented in the ancient handbooks of Cicero, Quintililian, and Aristotle, among others. These theories remain the basis for much argument theory and instruction today (e.g., Corbett, 1971, Fahnestock and Secor, 1982).

In these early handbooks, the central task of argument was the invention of proofs, and the social situation itself was seen as defining, and to some degree, determining the way in which proofs were constructed. Given the practical needs of citizens at the time, rhetoricians limited their description of argument to three public situations in which argument was necessary—deliberation, jurisprudence, and ceremony. These occasions for public speaking were thought to "carry" specific and somewhat singular purposes—to establish what should happen, to establish what has happened, or to establish the praiseworthiness of an event or an individual. Associated with these situations were relevant bodies of social knowledge and appropriate techniques—the commonplaces or *topoi*— from which an arguer might assemble persuasive syllogisms.

One obvious limitation of this perspective is that the range of purposes and settings for argument in today's society has expanded considerably. Contemporary scholars of rhetoric "no longer confine their interest to overtly defined goals of communication or consider communication only in public settings" (Clark & Delia, 1979 p. 195). Moreover, the success of the maxims and conventions employed in Aristotle's Rhetoric depended on their ubiquitous nature—that the shared beliefs of a public audience could somehow be generalized and inventoried in a conceptual warehouse called the topoi. But in today's cultural and social milieu, the kind of social homogeneity assumed in ancient times can no longer be assumed (Young, Becker, & Pike, 1970). Arguers are more often than not outsiders to the communities they address; they may need to shift into and out of rhetorical contexts that are not predictable or known to them.

An entire field of argumentation scholarship, "field theory," is now devoted to identifying and studying argument as it operates in different contexts, not only in public settings but in domains with very specialized kinds of knowledge such as science and art. These theorists are demonstrating that argument can take as many forms as there are fields, because the subject matter (Toulmin, 1958, 1972), purposes (Rowland, 1982), and rules (Gronbeck, 1985) for argument may vary from field to field. Members of a field are assumed to work towards a common purpose, rely on a common body of knowledge, and attend to a common set of procedures that help define and motivate their activity. As McKerrow has noted, " [An argument] field is. . . a collectively established body of implicit or explicit rules for communication that pre-exist the act of argument in a given case" (1989, p.18). Thus, although field theorists acknowledge a wider range of arguments situations than classical theorists, they too present situations as stable and a priori bodies of social knowledge that guide argument production. And indeed, professional domains do establish means for inculcating and training individuals to argue as members of the field. A cognitive psychologist writing an argument for publication, may turn to relevant articles published in her field's journals, the knowledge base from which participants in her discipline might argue. A lawyer, generating a legal brief, may turn to specific procedures and precedents that have been codified in legal texts. In these contexts, participants have come together again and again for the purpose of arguing. Over time, the resources for arguing in such formal situations have been structured and

made explicit in written guidelines, mission statements, rules of order, review processes, and a canon of reference documents and texts.

But even in these formal situations, which can be said to regulate and discipline (cf. Foucault, 1979) the knowledge and knowledge-generating procedures of its participants, gaps in knowledge, disputes over methodology, and a range of specialized purposes emerge and allow for some flexibility in argument. Members of a discipline exercise their options in choosing to argue over certain problems rather than others, in citing certain kinds of knowledge over others, and in exercising certain methods over others. This allows them to push at the borders of a field and to change the very field in which they argue by expanding its knowledge base and modifying its methods (Toulmin, 1972).

In less formal fields, events in which arguers do not share a history, the instability of purposes, knowledge, and procedures for arguing—and the importance of individual perception and choice—become even more apparent. Because participants in such fields have not, in repeated interaction with each other, established the ground rules for arguing, argument strategies may be developed and continually modified in the very act of arguing. Theorists who have studied informal argument fields, for example the dyadic interchanges noted by both Willard (1983) and Kneupper (1981), seem to approach fields not as stable entities that guide performance, but as provisional agreements created in social interaction.

In sum, classical theorists and many contemporary theorists of argument as well have defined argument situations as collective bodies of knowledge from which arguers (assumed to be knowledgeable members of the field) construct proofs. This shared knowledge base is thought to include needed procedural information (how to argue) topic information (what to argue) and the appropriate purposes of argument. This view of argument situations certainly enables theorists to describe broad patterns of reasoning and argument within certain domains and to account for the difficulty of novices working in unfamiliar domains. However, this approach is less interested in and less able to account for individual differences in reasoning that occur within domains and the ways in which individuals manage to negotiate new or ill-defined argument situations. The framework that follows attempts to account for this process of negotiation, and importantly, the role of the arguer as a constructor of knowledge.

THE CONSTRUCTIVE FRAMEWORK

1. Argument situations entail a range of material, social, and personal resources.

In theorizing about argument as a process, it may first be necessary to understand argument situations not as fixed entities (fields on which arguers can play) but as events that evolve over time, a series of problem-solving transactions in which people use persuasive communication to resolve conflict. According to this active, constructive view of composing, the cognition of the arguer is itself a necessary part of the argument situation. Rather than positing the existence of some defining and disembodied set of knowledge that influences the writer (a somewhat deterministic view), it may be more productive to recognize that purposes, knowledge and procedures are potentially available to writers as "material and social resources" (Lave, 1988) for argument.

Material resources such as time, money, and equipment can shape and constrain the way in which writers select, connect, and organize information in composing. The tools of pen, paper, and computer, for example, can influence the composing process (Haas, 1987). Textual resources other than those produced by the writer can certainly be an influence (Porter, 1986); published articles and books can offer relevant topic knowledge, providing examples and facts or serving as models for argument. Other material resources, such as written guidelines or text templates may constrain and guide the arguer's process in explicit ways.

Topics and strategies for argument also become available to writers through social resources—the influences, cues, and direction afforded by other participants in the context who act as readers, coaches, collaborators, or critics. (See Lunsford & Ede, 1986; Freedman, 1987; Nelson, 1988 for examples of social influence on the writing process.) All writing—and this includes argumentation—is not so much the construction of meaning by an individual, but the co-construction of meaning with others (Le Fevre, 1987; Bruffee, 1984; Nystrand, 1989; Flower, 1994).

But arguers rely not only on material and social resources but on personal resources as well. A number of studies have demonstrated that people vary in their ability to construe an audience, i.e., to differentiate characteristics of personality, belief and attitude, a skill critical in adapting persuasive messages (O'Keefe & Delia, 1979; Rubir & Rafoth, 1986; Piche & Roen, 1987). Writers and readers bring their own prior knowledge about an issue and their own feelings and experiences to a task, including self-perceptions that can influence performance (Bandura, 1986). They also bring schemata, internalized writing conventions and genres. Writers rely heavily on this knowledge as they interpret the present situation and build meaning, for writers use prior knowledge analogically, to understand, elaborate on, and evaluate new information (Norman, 1980; Gentner, 1983; Langer, 1986; Reder, Charney, & Morgan,1986; Spiro, Feltovich, Coulson, & Anderson,1987). This knowledge is connected and integrated as individuals build a mental representation of meaning in a rhetorical situation (Spivey, 1990; Stein, 1992).

Acknowledging personal resources in argumentation is critical, for it can account for individual differences and outcomes. The collective memory of a profession or group, its conventions and sanctioned beliefs, are not equivalent to the working knowledge of an individual writer, even if that writer is a member of the group in which she argues. Once we recognize that participants in an argument situation, both readers and writers of argument, rely on these personal resources, we recognize that it is simplistic to regard the purposes, knowledge and procedures for arguing in a situation as homogeneous or unified in any sense. If we hope to understand how individual writers construct arguments, it will be crucial to recognize that an argument situation can entail a range of purposes, and a range of both content and procedural knowledge that a writer may or may not recognize or use.

This emerging task environment—the material and social resources that become available and which interact with the writer's process and her own personal resources—is what constitutes the unfolding "situation" and this situation itself may be structured by the larger social, economic, and political context in which it emerges (Ohmann, 1985; Lave, 1988; Giroux, 1988). The writer herself, in acting upon and with this environment,

also changes it as she acts. Cognition "mediates" context inasmuch as context mediates cognition (Flower, 1989). Writing can thus be described as an act of situated cognition (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) in that a dialectical relationship obtains between the writing process and the writing situation, of which the process itself is an important component.

Argument situations or fields clearly do not exist apart from the writers who operate "in" them, nor do they offer writers a set of homogeneous and stable specifications from which to argue. Rather, argument situations are cognitive and social events that entail a range of material, social, and personal resources that can be developed and even modified by participants. This is an important starting point for a framework of argument , for it suggests that the features of a rhetorical situation are not explicitly defined at the outset of argument; rather the arguer herself must assume an active role in recognizing and representing those features as she argues.

2. Writers represent argument situations by actively constructing a network of goals and strategies for selecting, connecting, and organizing data, warrants, and claims.

Our interest in the individual reasoning process of arguers requires, to be sure, some understanding of a writer's cognition, especially as it pertains to the writing process. Although arguers rely on situational resources—information that emerges in working memory, through interactions with interlocutors or in the material artifacts at their disposal—they may differ quite markedly in how they perceive and attend to these resources. It is not the available pastiche of resources that determine the way an arguer proceeds, rather, it is the way the writer configures these resources into a *representation* of the argument task.

Flower (1994) has distinguished the available, potentially endless array of resources that might exert influence over a writer from those resources that are activated and attended to, what she calls the writer's "live options." But how do such live options contribute to a plan for argument, a working space where organized decision-making can begin?

Constructing Goals for Argument

Rhetoricians have long defined argument as finding the best available means of persuasion. This definition assumes that argument begins with a claim already in hand; the arguer's main task is to find good reasons. But many theorists, shifting their attention to the process rather than the products of argumentation, have begun to recognize that argument does not necessarily begin with a claim and counterclaim already in hand (stasis), but instead begins with a feeling of difficulty, a sense of a problem (Young, 1978). Since problems or exigencies do not exist entirely apart from people's perception of them the process of argument can be said to begin at the point in which the arguer perceives and begins to define the problem or exigency (Bitzer, 1980), identifying situational constraints and resources that will determine what kind of claims it may be necessary and possible to make .

Argument begins, then, with the writer's representation of the rhetorical situation, a mental image of the task and a tentative plan for accomplishing it. Plans, are intentional

structures (Flower, 1988) that include a writer's rhetorical goals and her strategies for what to do, what to say and how to say it (Flower, Schriver, Carey, Haas, & Hayes 1989). It is this unique network of goals and strategies that guides the development of claims and support.

But what kind of goals might inform an argument? By definition, all arguments address a similar purpose, to address open questions through the use of claims and supporting evidence. But argument, like any kind of writing, can achieve many purposes, and arguers sometimes set multiple goals for themselves such as developing a certain kind of relationship with the audience or maintaining a certain image. Individual differences in persuasive messages can sometimes be understood by examining the particular configuration of purposes and goals set by the arguer (Clark and Delia, 1979). It is important to recognize writers' goals, because goals influence the strategies writers choose and the knowledge they employ (Flower, Stein, Ackerman, McCormick, & Peck, 1990). Working goals narrow the search for information, guide the writer's assessment of ideas and her own progress, and lend a framework for selecting, connecting and organizing information—constructive strategies that define the composing process (Spivey, 1990).

Consider how writers with different goals for argument might proceed quite differently. A writer who perceives the need to support a position so that others will not vote it down (i.e., he sees his goal as advocacy), may very well engage in strategies of unilateral argument, selecting and foregrounding only that data that supports the position in favor. Yet another writer, perceiving that it is not yet time to make a decision, and thinking that others may wish to explore options in conversation with her (i. e., she sees her goal as inquiry), may very well engage in strategies of bilateral argument, selecting and even foregrounding data that support various positions and qualifying her remarks more openly in an effort to sustain the discussion (see Johnstone, 1978, for a discussion of unilateral and bilateral argument). And certainly, these goals themselves could change as the argument unfolds and new resources come to light. Consider how my tactics of inquiry might change if I suddenly perceived my interlocutors as hostile or biased. Or if, given my own personal experiences, I find that I sympathize more with one position, despite my intentions to be "objective." Clearly, the goals we define and redefine for ourselves as we write will influence the knowledge and strategies we call upon. But how should we define argument strategies in a constructivist framework?

Selecting, Connecting, and Organizing: Strategies for Constructing Data, Warrants, and Claims

The Toulmin model (1958; Toulmin, Rieke, & Janik, 1984), used extensively to teach and critique both written and oral argument, comes closest to defining universal moves in argumentation. In this model, arguments begin with a *claim,* which is supported or refuted with *data*, relevant facts or grounds for the claim. *Warrants* provide information that sanctions the move from the facts given to the claims presented. As arguers make these moves, they sometimes qualify their claims with *modal terms* such as "sometimes" and "certainly." And arguers sometimes produce additional *backing* for their warrants and generate *rebuttals.* It is important to note that Toulmin's model is an attempt to describe how argument can be used to *verify* knowledge. Thus, Toulmin presents these elements of argument not as generative strategies but as text features that can help us map out and evaluate how claims are justified in a given argument. In order

to focus on argument as a constructive process, it may be useful to apply constructivist strategies of selecting, connecting, and organizing information to the data-warrant-claim model.

First of all, claims are rarely given (except, perhaps, in a debate exercise); rather, arguers *select* the claims they will defend in a situation. This selection process involves searching for and evaluating relevant positions and information that may assert themselves in memory, in a book one is reading or in a conversation with one's interlocutors. The extent to which a writer must search for and evaluate information for a claim can vary, depending on the writer's goals and also on the situational resources available. For example, the writer may search for one claim or a series of claims, depending, on whether he sees his goal as advocacy or inquiry. And situational resources, including the writer's own knowledge, may certainly affect his selection process. Does he have a pet solution to the type of problem he perceives? If so, he may not have to search far for a claim. Have his interlocutors presented a certain proposal, a claim that he must evaluate for or against? Or are the issues so unclear that he must himself develop potential positions one might take?

Writers also select information to support their claims, searching for and evaluating potential evidence. Although we would agree that writers may sometimes draw on previously organized knowledge and procedures that may be available as schemata in memory or as a recognizable genre in a community, we would argue that this selection process is guided by relevance principles derived from the particular goals a writer has set for herself in an argument situation. Such goals may or may not include being logical, using the "correct" disciplinary procedures, or pleasing one's interlocutors. As we have already suggested, an arguer's goals are complex interpretations of knowledge gleaned from personal, material, and social resources.

In addition to these selection strategies, arguers also employ strategies for connecting information in argument. Warranting, when understood as a connective (rather than a verificational) strategy in composing, is not simply a move to justify for a reader the logic of claims and data already in hand, but is a move to discover and create those links by developing inferences and elaborations in the process of planning and composing an argument. These connecting strategies are critical, because data and claims for addressing a problem may not, in many situations, be readily available, obvious or sufficiently structured for the task. Inference and elaboration can transform available information into usable propositions or relevant evidence.

Finally, writers use organizational strategies to structure information in ways relevant to the problem they perceive. Organizational strategies may be adapted from patterns learned from similar experiences (cf. Chi, Feltovich &Glaser, 1981) or they may be provided by available templates (e.g., a complaint form).

Data, warrants, and claims are rarely "given" in a situation; it is more accurate to say that arguers construct them. However, it is important to note that the constructive burden the writer bears—the extent to which the writer must actively select, organize, and connect information—may depend on the writer's perceived match between her own knowledge and that of her readers, or the purpose and goals she has set and the resources at hand. (See Figure 1.) Consider the following situation, in which the available data for arguing appears to be well structured for the writer's intended purpose: A tenant

attempting to prove that he had paid the previous month's rent might already possess the material resources needed to prove his point; in this case a dated, cancelled check is his data. If his goal is simply to prove payment, he might just send a copy of the check to his landlord with a brief note: "I already paid last month's rent—see attached check!" In this case, the available data need not be elaborated or explained at great length, for the situational resources are adequate for the task the writer has set for himself. On the other hand, a prospective tenant who wants to convince a landlord to forego a security deposit may face a more difficult and ambiguous task. He may have to construct evidence that he is trustworthy and will be a reliable tenant. The evidence needed to meet those goals might not be readily available. He may have to devise strategies for locating and elaborating relevant data.

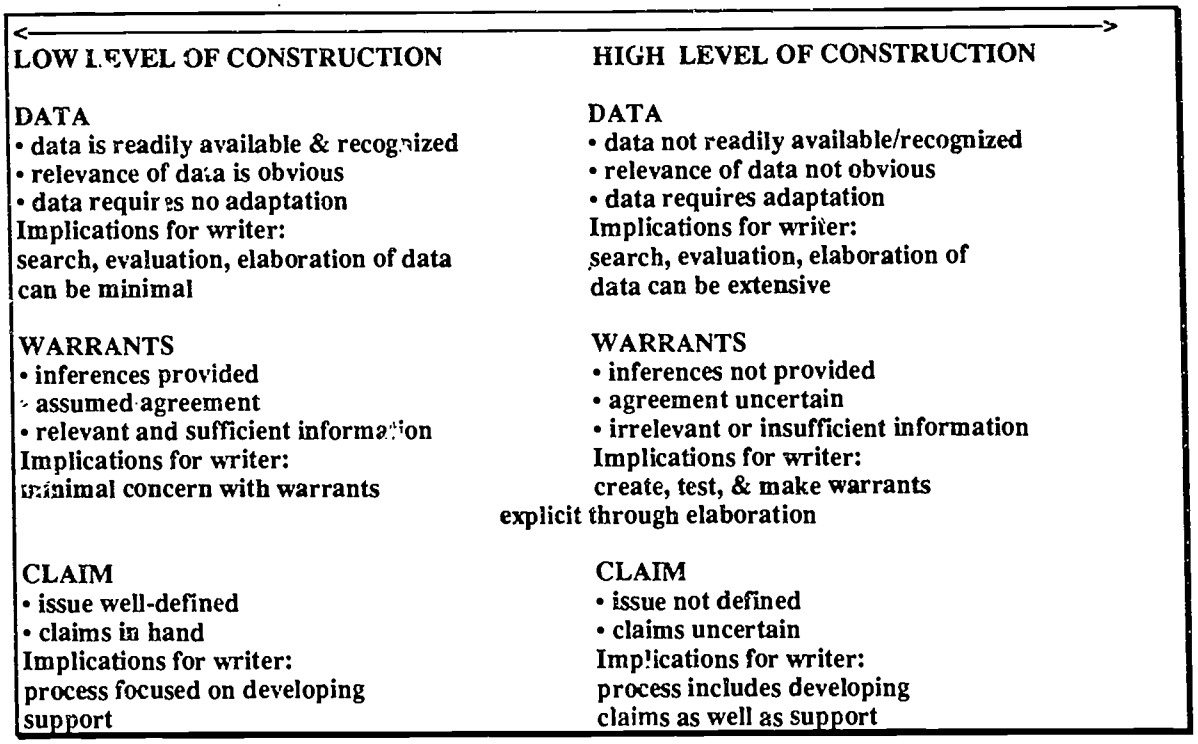

FIGURE 1: DEGREE OF CONSTRUCTIVITY IN ARGUMENT

Thus, although some situations may provide strong cues and resources that may direct the writer towards specific procedures, knowledge, and purposes for argument, the writer may refine, abandon, and modify this information as she constructs specific goals and strategies. In acknowledging the role of task representation, we can account for individual differences in arguments in a way that field theory cannot. Moreover, once we acknowledge that goals are constructed, not given, we can explain why arguers who operate in informal fields, where the knowledge for argument may not be well defined, can still manage to argue in purposeful and strategic ways.

3. Arguers negotiate argument situations as they address conflicts in the goals they construct and in the strategies they employ.

If we hope to understand how individual writers negotiate argument situations and perhaps even approximate argument in fields in which they are not yet members, we might examine not just the goals they set for themselves but the way in which their working plans for argument change as the argument event unfolds. Argument, like any writing, is not a linear process in which goals, once set, simply determine the course of events. Writing is recursive; goals are examined, reexamined and modified as writers acquire new information and feedback and as they assess their strategies.

A great deal of research in reading, writing, and problem solving has demonstrated that people become more consciously aware of their own goals and strategies and begin to monitor their progress more closely when they sense difficulty or ambiguity in a task (Flavell, 1979; Perkins, 1981; Garner, 1987; Durst, 1989). Some researchers have claimed that argument by definition is an inherently ill-defined task requiring writers to work tentatively, assessing the merit of their evolving plans and text by creating working goals based on their developing understanding of the issue and the audience (cf. Voss, Greene, Post & Penner, 1983; Voss, Tyler, & Yengo, 1983). But as indicated in Figure 1, we do not consider all argument tasks to be equally in difficult or unstructured by nature. We would expect higher levels of metacognition and monitoring, however, in those in situations where arguers become aware of gaps and problems in the resources at their disposal, where they may be novices, or where resources are not well structured in relation to the goals they have set. These are situations in which high levels of knowledge construction may be required.

Some of the strategic features of monitoring include writers' awareness or detection of alternatives, contradictions, and gaps in knowledge (Higgins, Flower, & Petraglia, 1992), both at a global level, e.g., in perceiving competing goals in a situation, and at a more local level, e.g., in noticing contradictions in one's evolving text. When writers detect such difficulties, they often diagnose the problem and apply alternative strategies or even revise their representation of the task (Flower, Hayes, Carey, Schriver, & Stratman, 1986; Sitko, 1991).

As we examine the decision-making of arguers in conflict, we are more able to observe plans that, ordinarily, might be tacit, and the ways that writers actively negotiate the argument situation. These metacognitive moments are key sites in which to observe the intersection of cognition and context in argument construction. Understanding the choices and decisions writers make can help us understand not only patterns and differences in the evidence and claims that emerge in writers' texts, but the unique "logics" that might have informed those text patterns.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

This framework suggests a set of descriptive tools for studying argument construction and for understanding the individual performance of writers:

- *Examining personal resources*
  Researchers can investigate the experiences, biases, and routines that writers bring to an argument situation.

- *Examining social and material resources*
  Researchers can investigate the criteria of readers, critics, and other interlocutors in a situation, particularly, explicit cues given to writers and the texts and tools provided for them.

- *Examining the writer's task representation*
  Researchers can determine which situational resources are activated in argument by examining the writer's purposes, goals and strategies for argument.

- *Examining conflict negotiation*
  Researchers can identify key sites of conflict in the writer's process and the ways in which these conflicts are resolved.

PART II.
A STUDY OF SCHOOL-BASED ARGUMENT

This study describes student writers as they constructed arguments within the context of a college classroom, creating a picture of school-based argument drawn not from ideal models of argument as envisioned by educators, but from the experiences of students themselves. This description includes a snapshot of the goals and purposes they associated with school argument, the conflicts they perceived, and the strategies they used as they negotiated a response to the goals and constraints they recognized. This process-based description can help account for patterns and differences in student performance.

The Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at an inner city campus of a community college in Pittsburgh and focused on the writing of nine female students (ages 18-36) in a college reentry program. These women were enrolled in a developmental English course designed to prepare women with below college-level skills for mainstream coursework, and each agreed to provide interviews and copies of their written texts for use in this study.

Over the course of the semester, students wrote six essays, summarizing, responding to, synthesizing, and finally arguing about issues in the source text, *Re-Reading America*. Their writing portfolios were to be evaluated (Pass/Fail) by a 20 member review board, comprised of all instructors teaching the course during the semester. Students cannot advance into mainstream course work until they pass this review.

The multi-source argument is the focus of the present study. For this assignment, students read an interview with C. P Ellis, a former Klansman who described his personal transformation. They also read three articles on the psychological and social causes of racism and prejudice based on theories of Peter Loewenberg, Gordon Allport, and James Boggs. The assignment follows:

> Allport, Boggs, and Loewenberg have offered us different theories that attempt to explain the nature and causes of racism. The C. P. Ellis story provides a real and complex example on which you can test these theories and argue for their usefulness. After reading " C. P. Ellis" write a paper that addresses the following question: *Which theory or theories can best account for racism as portrayed in Terkel's interview with C. P. Ellis?* Please use examples and evidence from all of the readings to support your decision.

At the start of the semester, we conducted a profile interview in which each woman discussed her experiences with written argument in and outside of school. (See Appendix A for a full list of these background interview questions.). Students were asked to describe one representative example of argument in both settings. (See Figure 2.)

Student	Non-School Argument & Approach Used	School Argument & Approach Used
Dana	Letter appealing a hospital bill. Reviewed events; stapled diagnoses, bills from other labs. Threatened to bring in attorney.	College Psych. paper: "Divorce is harder on women." Used women friends' experiences as examples.
Kate	Letter persuading congressmen to vote on bill limiting animal testing. Used animal rights newsletter as a a guide and examples from animal rights articles.	No arguments.
Helen	Can't think of any.	Can't think of any.
Rita	Eviction letters to husband's tenants. Warned them of legal action. Letter required by law.	Pro-con paper on capital punishment. Used info. from magazines. Discussed both sides.
Kiesha	A researched summary and illustration of tumors, to show doctors her intelligence. Accurate technical info. presented.	Paper showing midwifery is a good career. Info. from midwives, personal experiences & research from catalog.
Tina	Letter demanding reimbursement for a defective dress. Described events and threatened legal action. Took notes for small claims court.	Can't think of any.
Shari	Letter to Channel 11 News Reporter, requesting help with a fraudulent mail order co. Showed receipts, described events. Used sympathy approach & appealed to his ego.	"Debates" showing both sides. E.g., current assignment in which student must argue against author's claims--create counter-examples.
Eliz.	Letter to Hospital demanding apology for releasing her test results to unauthorized person. Described situation, used legal info. on privacy with help of lawyer.	Literature paper arguing why stealing was wrong in Silas Marner. Personal opinions.
Lisa	Can't think of any. Bad" Used facts from magazines,	Term paper: "Why Smoking is books.

FIGURE 2: STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH SCHOOL AND NON-SCHOOL ARGUMENT

The profiles show that seven of the writers had used argument outside of school as a way to negotiate conflict in their personal lives and to defend themselves in their interactions with social agencies, institutions, and businesses. The non-school arguments described in the interviews required the writers to *exchange* information; moreover, the type of information they needed to exchange was often quite obvious to them—it was clearly specified by requirements and the forms they filled out and it did not require a great deal of adaptation or elaboration. These arguments typically began with a claim or counterclaim that grew out of a personal crisis. These arguments stood in sharp contrast to the assigned, multi-source argument. The type of proof required in the assignment was more ambiguous. While the four source texts provided the writers with content for their arguments, the material was not directly relevant to the issue they needed to address. They needed to select, transform, and reorganize the authors' concepts so that they could be applied to the case of C.P. Ellis. They could not simply exchange the three theories of racism verbatim, but had to construct reasons that would link these theories to their claims. And a wide number of claims and qualifications were possible. Thus, we would predict that the arguments these women produced (and often quite successfully) outside of school would not necessarily prepare them for the formal invention and reasoning required in the school task.

Although six writers remembered argument assignments in their previous schooling, four of the assignments also did not appear relevant to the current task. They required summaries of others' arguments (e.g., pro and con papers) or personal opinions on an issue. Only two assignments bore resemblance to the multi-source assignment. Elizabeth was asked to defend why stealing is wrong, using the case of Silas Marner, and Leslie had to support why smoking is bad, using library sources.

These profiles suggested that the study might be an opportunity to understand how a group of outsiders might move into a new argument context. Given their lack of relevant experience, how will they perceive the demands of this task? How will they adapt their available knowledge to the current situation and negotiate its demands?

OBSERVATIONS OF ARGUERS AT WORK

1. What Patterns and Variations Emerged in the Argument Texts?

In what follows, we illustrate data-warrant-claim patterns in students' arguments, examining all nine thesis statements and mapping out the data, warrants and claims from the drafts. This initial text analysis is offered so that we might later assess the extent to which analyses based on the constructive framework might help explain patterns that appeared in the texts.

The Nature of the Claims: The Writers' Theses

We extracted and examined thesis statements (see Figure 3) from the writers' drafts. The instructor had asked students to underline their theses, so this extraction was relatively easy. Here, we have boldfaced portions of these claims to facilitate discussion of them. Given the assigned question, we would expect the writers' theses to assert that a particular theory or combination of the theories might account for Ellis's racism better than some other set of concepts or theories. On the surface, the writers' theses appeared to be relevant, each connecting one or more of the theories to the test case (Ellis). However, most of the thesis

statements did not explicitly address the *extent* to which the chosen theories were descriptive, especially in *relation* to the other theories. Six theses (all but Elizabeth's, Tina's, and Kiesha's) were general and unqualified, e.g., Rita's: ". . .all three theories help to explain C. P. Ellis's racism and prejudice." But how well do they explain his racism? Are all, some, or most of Ellis's racist behaviors accounted for by these theories? Seven of the students (all but Helen and Rita) did not explicitly compare the explanatory power of their chosen theory *in relation* to the theories that were not chosen. Rita's use of the term "especially" suggested that while all three theories apply, she had discriminated amongst them and had found Boggs to be the most explanatory. Helen's claim, that Boggs and Loewenberg "best" describe Ellis, also indicated a comparison. Elizabeth, Dana, and Leslie appear to implicitly have made a choice, because they limited their claim to one or two theories rather than all three. Curiously, though, these choices were not articulated as the best or better theories of the bunch, for they made no mention at all of the theories they did not choose. This was born out in the body of their texts as well, where they made little if any mention of these other theories.

Kiesha	Peter Loewenberg theories of **displacement and projection** outlined in his essay "The Psychology of Racism" **define C. P. Ellis's unconscious psychological reasoning of prejudice; while James Bogg's theory best explains racism and prejudice through economic gains by class and race structure;** in his essay "Uprooting Racism and Racists in the United States." Justifies C. P Ellis's attitude to protect and maintain the social order of white dominance and supremacy for the survival of his race.
Rita	It appears to me that all three theories help to explain C.P. Ellis's racism and prejudice, **especially** Boggs's theory.
Helen	Boggs and Loewenberg's theories seem to **best** describe the racism as portrayed in the C. P. Ellis story.
Leslie	While reading the interview C.P Ellis, by Studs Terkel, I realized that the theories of Loewenberg and those of Allport explain why Ellis was a racist person.
Eliz.	Allport's groups theories cover **almost all of the changes** C.P. went through.
Tina	After reading Lowenberg, Allport, and Boggs' theories about racism, you could say that they are seen in C.P. Ellis's interview with Studs Terkel. **However**, as a young woman living in the late twentieth century, I do not see either any of Lowenberg, Allport or Boggs theories of racism in my own experience. **Although there are times that their theories exist, it was only when I was younger**. But as an adult, I do not see their theories exemplified in my peers.
Kate	The study of C.P. Ellis reveals a complex personality that can best be explained by a combination of several theories on racism.
Dana	Several theories addressed by Gordon Allport, Author of "Theories of Prejudice," and Peter Lowenberg, Author of "The Psychology of Racism" can be examined more thoroughly by applying them to Studs Terkel's interview with former Ku Klux Klan member C. P. Ellis.
Shari	By creating a psychological profile based on theories by the said writers, all three could have been writing about Ellis.

FIGURE 3: STUDENTS' THESIS STATEMENTS

Why did the writers produce such general claims when the assignment itself suggested a more qualified discussion? Perhaps these students simply did not engage in the comparative analysis required to make a qualified claim; perhaps they did not consider all or many of the possible responses they might have made. But can we know this from their texts? And if they did not, why not? Was it a matter of resistance? Ability? Misunderstanding? Without a closer look at their constructive processes, we can do little more than speculate.

The Nature of the Evidence: The Writers' Data and Warrants

In this assignment, the writers did not need to construct an argument from scratch (nor should they, given the injunction to use the source texts), but nevertheless, they needed to adapt the sources, for the theories were based on historical examples and psychological studies only indirectly related to the particular case of C. P. Ellis. But how would we expect a writer to select, connect, and present these sources in a manner relevant to the assignment? In this case, we might expect a writer to divide the issue into its relevant parts, first determining those aspects of Ellis's life that the theories must account for. We might expect the writer to consider the key concepts in each theory and to assess how each applied or did not apply to the various aspects of Ellis's life. This analysis would help the writer weigh the explanatory power of these theories and to generate evidence for her conclusions.

Evidence would include positive, relevant examples from the Ellis interview to illustrate the theoretical concepts chosen negative examples that would help discount the theories in question. If a writer asserted that Loewenberg's concepts of projection and displacement account for Ellis's racism, then we would expect her to include examples that illustrate each of these concepts. But of course, we would also expect the writer to explain how these particular incidents or quotes qualify as examples. The writer would need to make her warrants somewhat explicit, clearly defining projection and displacement and explaining how the examples fit. This combination of a claim, relevant examples, and explicit warrants would constitute a tightly structured, coherent argument. Each aspect of the thesis would be clearly accounted for with supporting examples, and each example would be clearly linked to the claim. These are classification and analysis moves we might expect in this type of academic assignment and which are taught in contemporary argument texts. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) have called the common linking move "liaison." Creating negative examples, to discredit or rule out a theory, is a common move they refer to as "disassociation." But when we turn to the particularities of real texts, we encounter a great deal of variation that suggests these students are somehow departing from this idealized process. These writers appeared to vary in the extent to which they adhered to these expected moves. In addition, some additional moves appeared in their texts.

When we examined the actual drafts, we noticed that supporting examples were often absent. Consider the structure of Rita's paper, which argued ". . . all three theories help to explain C.P. Ellis's racism and prejudice, especially Boggs's theory." Given this claim, we might expect Rita to provide data (examples, quotes, anecdotes) from Ellis's interview that illustrate concepts from Allport, Loewenberg, and Boggs. We might expect most of these examples to illustrate Boggs' theory, since Rita favored it in her claim, or

we might expect her to point out counterexamples—experiences not adequately accounted for by Allport and Loewenberg.

The structure of Rita's second paragraph, in which she discusses Allport's concepts, has been mapped out in Figure 4.

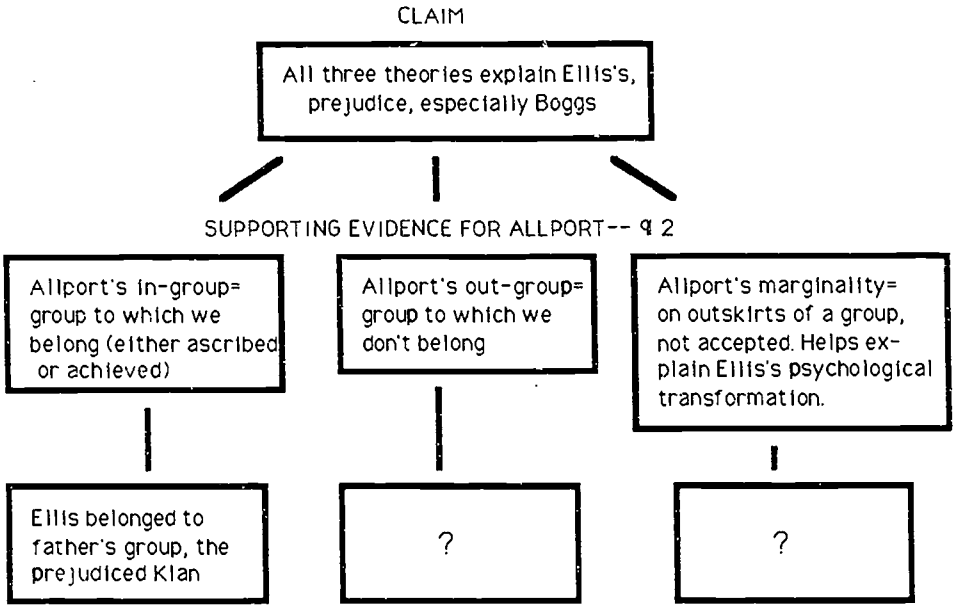

FIGURE 4: RITA'S PARAGRAPH ON ALLPORT

Note that some of the supporting data for Rita's claims are missing. She has defined Allport's concepts but has only given one supporting example that connects his concept of an in-group to Ellis's life, the fact that he belonged to the Klan. It remains unclear whether the concept of an out-group applied. And although Rita claimed that marginality explained Ellis's transformations, she did not link this concept to any specific examples of his transformation.

While this absence of supporting examples was common across all the papers, a few students made more serious omissions. Tina, for example, never discussed Boggs at all in the body of her text, even though she claimed that all three theories applied to C. P. Ellis. And, although Kiesha claimed that Loewenberg and Boggs could explain Ellis, she included a surprising discussion of Allport's "group norms" to explain Ellis's experience, an example that didn't seem relevant to her thesis. As we can see, the data used in these arguments was, at times, insufficient or irrelevant.

Rita might have strengthened her case for Boggs by including negative examples, incidents that could not be accounted for by the other theories. But counterevidence of this sort was not only absent in Rita's text, but in all of the students' texts, with one

exception. This was Tina, who included some quotes and examples from her own experiences, to demonstrate that hatred for others was really not racism, but simple jealousy. Otherwise, only positive examples were used.

Students often omitted or underelaborated warrants that might have connected their examples to their claims. This lack of elaboration is a feature that was not only common across this set of papers, but has been well documented in the persuasive writing of students in general, even at the college level (Crowhurst, 1991). Again, Rita's paper demonstrated this pattern. In paragraph four, Rita provided a summary of Boggs' theory and pulled relevant quotes and descriptions of Ellis that fit this model. She did not, however, explain why or how this support or her previous discussion of Allport and Loewenberg demonstrated that Boggs was better than the other theories, other than to reiterate her claim "In my opinion, Bogg's theory best explains. . ." Tina's paper demonstrated this difficulty with warrants at a more local level. She provided examples of projection and displacement from Ellis's life, but failed to provide linking definitions that might help a reader assess whether the examples she cited were relevant or not.

In addition to moves we might expect (defining concepts and providing examples from sources), an unexpected move often appeared in the last paragraph of the texts. In Rita's last paragraph, she attempted to buttress her claim not source materials, but with cliche and personal commentary. She repeated the claim, "Unfortunately, this [Boggs' theory] is probably a primary reason why prejudice exists today," quoting the old maxim, "Money is the root of all evil." While this kind of support seemed irrelevant to this type of formal argument, it was used in several other papers.

This pattern—sporadic or insufficient supporting data, unelaborated warrants, the tendency towards positive examples rather than negative examples or counterevidence, and the use of personal reaction—was common across these students' texts. If we were to conduct a more rigorous analysis of the data, warrant, and claims for each of these texts, we could flesh out these general patterns in detail, showing precisely how many pieces of this template were left unfilled by each student. But such an analysis would not help us account for these gaps. It would not tell us why these texts did not compare the theories, why students sometimes failed to provide necessary examples, and why they inserted opinions and commentary that seemed irrelevant. Texts are limited in their ability to tell their own histories, to reveal the constructive moves by which they were created. Towards this end, we will use the constructive framework to investigate these patterns further.

2. What range of purposes, goals, and criteria do participants perceive as they write and read school-based arguments?

If an argument situation can encompass a range of purposes, goals, and criteria, which ones will participants in the context of a college classroom perceive and attend to? The main participants in this study included the student writers as well as their readers—the instructor and review board members.

Review Board and Teacher Criteria: Data Collection and Analysis

In order to capture the review board's perception of argument in this situation, we examined the criteria that emerged in their written commentary on a set of norming

essays. These essays were actual arguments composed by students early in the semester, prior to the assigned that is the main focus of this study. Students were asked to argue about the causes of animosity towards a marginalized group:

> Select one of society's marginal groups (African Americans, Jews, gays and lesbians, Orientals, etc.) and analyze the animosity that some people feel towards members of that group. Now that you have studied some theories of the sources of prejudice, what do you think are the causes of this animosity toward that group? Feel free to refer to Allport, Boggs, or Loewenberg to support your theory.

The instructor selected four essays, each reflecting a different approach to the assignment, and submitted these essays to the review board, which regularly used norming essays such as these to warm up for their actual end-of-semester review. Each member used holistic evaluation to rate the essays (pass/fail) and comment on them in preparation for their meeting.

We tabulated the number of passing marks assigned to each essay, then compared salient features of those that passed and failed. We then studied the reviewers' comments and classified seven type of criteria that were mentioned. These criteria became the basis of a coding scheme. In a second pass, we used these categories to code each reviewer's comments on each of the four essays, hilighting key words and phrases that had influenced our decisions. We then provided an unmarked set of comments and the coding categories to our independent coder (a college writing instructor) who repeated this process independently. We met to assess reliability and to negotiate any coding disagreements. The highlighted phrases helped us to locate specific areas of disagreement. This coder was also asked to note any additional categories he saw, but he found none. Using pairwise comparison, we determined that we had reached 95% agreement on this coding. Because the coding scheme that emerged from reviewers' comments was itself an important finding in the data, these coding categories and the criteria they suggested are discussed later in detail. Finally, we used this coded data to tabulate the total number of reviewers' comments that had referred to each of the seven criteria. This analysis gave us a sense of which criteria were most salient in the review.

In order to elaborate on the instructor's use of these criteria, we attended and took notes on all classes, recording the instructor's comments on assignment objectives, particularly comments in which she offered specific techniques for reading, planning, writing, or revising the essays. We also examined key instructional handouts and audiotaped all class lectures during the unit, searching for key incidents in which the instructor discussed or gave advice on any of the seven criteria. In addition, we conducted a private interview with the instructor (see Appendix B), in which she explained her own criteria and expectations for the argument paper. And finally, the instructor agreed to audiotape her comments on students' drafts. We reviewed these comments, checking off the number of essays on which she had alluded to each of the seven criteria and generating examples of her evaluation.

This triangulation of data allowed us to describe the particular nature of argument as these readers perceived it in this context and to elaborate on the specific ways these criteria were being conveyed to students, documenting some of the social and material resources available to them. It provided a basis from which to compare reviewers' understanding of argument with the students' vision of the task.

Review Board and Teacher Criteria: Observations

Evaluations by the twelve-member review board showed a surprising conformity given that agreement on holistic evaluations of written texts is notoriously difficult to achieve. Having rated the four essays independently, all members agreed that the second essay would fail review, and all agreed that the third essay would pass. Reviews of essays one and four were mixed; all but one member agreed to fail essay four, while nine of the twelve agreed to pass the first essay:

ESSAY	NO. PASSING MARKS
Essay 1--Helen	9/12
Essay 2--Kiesha	0/12
Essay 3--Leslie	12/12
Essay 4--Elizabeth	1/12

Figure 5 lists the criteria implicit in the reviewers' comments (see key). At first glance, these criteria seem to reflect standards associated with school writing in general. But a closer examination of these criteria and the specific ways in which they were presented in the instructor's pedagogy illustrated the specific role they played in the teaching and evaluation of argument.

NO. ESSAYS ON WHICH CRITERIA WERE USED

REVIEWER	LOC	GLO	SRC	REL	DEV	ORIG	UND	N/C
A	1	2		2	3	2		
B		1	1			1		3
C	4	2	1	1	1	1		
D	4	1	2		1			
E	1	1	2	1	2	2		
F	1	3		1			1	
G	2	2	2	1	1			
H	3		1	1	1	1		
I	4		2	1		1	1	
J	1	2	1	2	1	2		1
K	4	2	3	4	2	1	1	
L	2	1						2
TOTAL	27/42	17/42	15/42	14/42	12/42	11/42	3/42	6

KEY:

LOC = LOCAL TEXT CONVENTIONS
GLO = GLOBAL TEXT CONVENTIONS
SRC = USE OF SOURCES
REL = RELEVANCE OF CLAIMS
DEV = DEVELOPMENT OF CLAIMS
ORIG = USE OF ORIGINAL IDEAS
N/C = NO COMMENT GIVEN
UND = UNDERSTANDS SOURCES

Twelve reviewers were asked to comment on four essays; total comments given = 42

FIGURE 5: CRITERIA MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED BY REVIEWERS

The role of text conventions in school-based argument

Proper use of local and global text conventions were the most salient criteria to emerge in the review. Of the 42 reviewer comments on these four sample essays (reviewers failed to give substantive comments six times), 27 comments referred to local text conventions and 17 referred to global text conventions. It is not surprising that text conventions became a primary issue in assessing these texts; writing instructors typically evaluate students' ability to manipulate words, paragraphs, and sentences, and their ability to comply with the standards of error-free prose and formal organizational patterns expected in academic writing. But what role did these text conventions play in the teaching of written argument?

Proper use of text conventions was also the most explicit criterion that emerged in the instructor's pedagogy. The instructor did not devote class time to local text features such as grammar and spelling, however she treated mechanical correctness as a necessary condition for passing, frequently reminding students that the review board would not pass folders with a high number of errors. However, the instructor did emphasize global text conventions in her daily teaching, specifically, the parts of an academic essay and

conventions for organizing its paragraphs. On the third day of class, she defined an essay as "a series of paragraphs that express ideas that support (explain, define, argue for) a thesis" (Class, 1/26). In a sample text, the instructor identified the introductory paragraph and thesis statement, the body of the paper, supporting topic sentences, and the conclusion. Students were instructed to attend to these parts of an essay as they critiqued each other's drafts throughout the semester.

Although these text conventions are typically taught in any composition classroom, here, they were presented as an heuristic for developing and elaborating an argument, not just arranging ideas. Shortly before the first draft was due, the instructor devoted an entire class period to issues of organization and focus. She explained that the review board would scan the papers for a thesis, topic sentences, and support for each topic sentence. She explained that, although "rigid," this format would help students focus on the intended purpose of the assignment—to argue that one or a combination of the theories best explains Ellis's racism—rather than simply to tell Ellis's life story. Thus, this text format was a prompt to argue rather than to narrate or summarize. She drew this format on the blackboard, creating an example thesis and topic sentences:

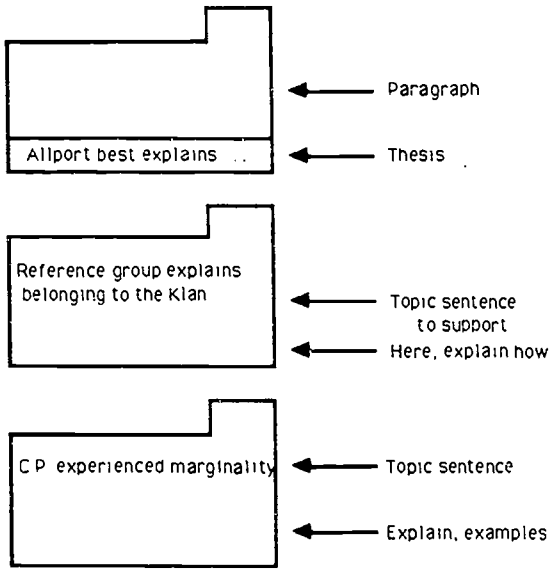

FIGURE 6: ORGANIZATIONAL FORMAT SUGGESTED BY THE INSTRUCTOR

The instructor admitted, "[This is] not the way that most professionals [write]—but it's the way you're going to have to write to get out of here." She added, "I don't want you to pay the price for not patterning your paper this way" (Class, 3/26). Earlier in the semester, the instructor provided students with a similar text template, a handout providing spaces for students to write in a thesis and supporting topic sentences before composing. Crowhurst (1991) has argued that text models such as these provide students with alternative schemata for persuasive writing. She argued that such schemata can prompt students to develop relevant points and elaborate on their claims. Thus, while these general conventions may not seem central to argumentative writing per se, they can, and in this context they did play an important role in teaching it.

In her interview, the instructor identified writing conventions as one of the most important criteria for evaluating the arguments.

> Q: What are the most important criteria for evaluating these papers?
>
> A: Well, first of all I think that [pause] it's important that they do what I've just been talking about doing and because that involves--in order to do that--they have to have read it, thought about it, come up with their own ideas, but show the reader where those ideas came from, what things in the text sparked those ideas. *In addition to that, it's important that the essays be organized, organized in the traditional sense of an introduction and the thesis statement that's clearly plopped in the introduction somewhere, preferably even towards the end. Each body paragraph should have a topic sentence that is clearly stated and the paragraph should stick to and support and explain that idea. When there's a new idea there should be a new paragraph and that new idea should be fully explained and so on and so forth.* In addition, all of the English 100 papers have to meet departmental criteria because of the review. So I'm just looking at the English 100 folder review checklist. They will fail for the following reasons [pause]. They have--if they have above 3% occurrence of spelling, grammar and punctuation errors, lack of sentence variety. Writings do not have fully developed introductory paragraphs, essays contain unsupported generalizations and assertions. Essays contain details, examples, and narrations uncontrolled by generalizations. Essays lack transitional cues to show relationship of one generalization or assertion to another. Essays do not adequately make use of the information and ideas presented in the readings. (Teacher interview, 3/19)

When commenting on students' drafts, the instructor raised organizational issues in five of the nine student texts, often suggesting that students separate ideas in a single paragraph into topic sentences that could be developed into separate paragraphs. Thus, the parts of an academic essay and its structure and organization were heavily emphasized as the instructor assigned and evaluated the arguments, and these text conventions were often presented as inventional strategies tied the task of supporting and elaborating a thesis.

Support in school-based argument: relevant claims, use of sources, and development

Argumentative writing in school invites students to move beyond recitation, to apply and use sources to support claims addressed to an academic reader. The reviewers' commentary evealed several different moves they expected students to take as they constructed and supported their claims. First, they expected *relevant claims or theses* given the assigned issue. Second, they expected supporting data or evidence for these claims to be based in the *assigned sources*, and finally, they expected full *development of reasoning* in the essay itself.

In this study, the issue to be argued was well stipulated in the wording of the assignment. Fourteen of the comments discussed the relevance of students' claims, for example, "It is unclear whether she can work with the question . . . assigned." The instructor also emphasized the importance of producing a relevant thesis:

> Q: In terms of thesis and support, what are you looking for in the paper?

> A: .... By thesis I mean, I guess, the same thing that most English teachers mean and that is that the paper has a main point, it has a main purpose. In this particular assignment, their purpose is to show that one or a combination of the theorists that we've studied on prejudice, one of these folks, best explains the prejudice that you see in C.P. Ellis. .... *They need to be focused on the kind of thesis that the topic is asking of them* and they need to have that central unifying point that the whole paper revolves around. Not just going off and talking about prejudice in general or telling C.P. Ellis's life story for the hell of it but writing to support the idea that this particular theory or theories do the best job of the others that they've read .... (Teacher interview, 3/19)

Shortly before the assignment was due, the instructor helped students shape their broad topics into specific claims that answered the assigned question more directly. For example, in reading her thesis to the class, Helen promised to "discuss" the theories she had read, and the instructor responded "Avoid saying 'let me discuss' or 'I would like to discuss' or 'my paper will be about.' Just go ahead and state it .... just say Boggs' and Loewenberg's theories best describe Ellis, and I will explain how."

In addition to relevance, reviewers expected some use of the assigned reading materials as support. Fifteen reviewer comments referred to the use of (or failure to use) source texts, e.g., "[the] essay fails to deal with the texts" and "more actual citations would help." The criterion is typical in an academic setting; reference to authorized knowledge has been described as a salient feature of academic argument (Swales, 1984), and argument in academic communities has been described as a way of acknowledging, contributing, and shaping a definable body of texts and the problems treated in those texts (Kuhn, 1970; Kaufer, Geisler, & Neuwirth, 1989). In this classroom, the text format was also used as a prompt for source materials. Once students had named their chosen theorist in their thesis, they were expected to plug the theorist's concepts into their topic sentences and to flesh out these paragraphs with relevant examples from the Ellis interview.

In addition to relevance and use of sources, development of claims was a criterion employed by the reviewers. These reviewers clearly saw this assignment as a knowledge-transforming task (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), expecting students to selectively adapt and transform the sources for the purpose of explaining a particular case of racism rather than for the purpose of telling everything they had learned. Thus, although it was necessary for students to use examples and concepts from the texts, it was not sufficient, for they were also expected to explain their choice of evidence and the connection between it and their conclusions. As one reviewer noted: "The language use is clever, but none of the claims in the essay are supported or explained—the "proof" is simply referred to." This reviewer seemed to be referring to an absence of warrants. Although that particular essay referred to the assigned authors, it did not explain how or why the references cited might constitute support. Another reviewer commented that one essay: "merely documents opinions and notions—does not address questions by way of logical analysis." A total of twelve comments referred to this development of claims, the explicit use of warrants, reasoning, and analysis in the essays.

These reviewers were not alone in noticing the absence of explicit reasons in student texts; the instructor both recognized this criterion in her interview, and it was the most frequently mentioned criterion in her comments on the drafts.

Q: How do you expect them to use the source materials and their own ideas on the topic?

A: . . . So as they go through the rest of the paper, they should unfold their ideas as to *how his thesis is accurate, how it's true that* Loewenberg's theory of projection and displacement really do explain a lot of what C. P. Ellis does. . .

There is a real sense in this excerpt that students need to communicate a claim to a reader who doesn't necessarily already know their path of reasoning. Immediately after distributing the assignment instructions, the instructor modeled this type of explanation and warranting, asking, "Did you see any authoritarian personality coming in there?" She illustrated how a connection to this concept might be made:

> He (C.P. Ellis) talks about his relationship with his father . . . . He said that he became a racist because his dad was a racist. Sort of like he accepted his dad's ideas. That's pretty much what authoritarian people do--Ok? They adopt the ideas of their parents to please the authority figures in their lives." (Class, 3/19)

Thus, the instructor used the text format as a prompt for relevant theses and source concepts and modeled her own reasoning and use of examples to illustrate how claims should be developed and explained throughout the paper. This text format and modeling offered students a "streamlined process" of sorts—to plug the appropriate concepts or theories into topic sentences, to search for positive evidence of these concepts in the Ellis interview (quotes and examples), and then to plug this evidence into relevant paragraphs, explaining the link between these examples and the claims made.

While this streamlined process can help students meet the course criteria in an efficient way, it leaves no obvious place for counterevidence or rival hypotheses, which typically play an important role in academic argument. Although the instructor explained that it was permissible to question the texts ("There's no definitive truth here") she warned students that they would need to support their critique. Tina raised a problem with this, asking, "But what if you only have you own life to prove it by?" The instructor answered:

> Your opinion is just as valid as anyone else's as long as you make it valid by supporting it well. Ok ? So if you disagree with these guys, that's great. . . as long as you support your disagreement and support it well, not just by saying that it's [racism is caused by] sin and it's sin because my Sunday school teacher says its sin but to really trace it historically and define sin in such a way that it has a broader application than a Sunday school application.

Dana recognized the burden of this option, saying "But that can get really big. . . . that can get so complex." Thus, while the instructor left the option of counterargument open to students, she did not provide them with specific ways in which to carry out this complex move, but only with a general reminder to support their criticisms.

<u>The role of original or personal ideas in school-based argument</u>

The use of original or personal ideas was perhaps the most ambiguous criterion that emerged in the review. Eleven of the reviewers make reference to it, yet the commentary

revealed mixed opinions on the place and value of a creative approach to the argument task. Although reviewers praised norming essay 4 for its "freshness" and "originality" (Elizabeth had created a first person, fictional story to make a point) they also indicated that originality should not have played a very large role in this assignment. Some even criticized the presence of personal reaction or opinion in the essays, including the use of personal pronouns such as "you" and "I."

The instructor addressed students' use of their own ideas in a number of ways. In class discussions and in homework, she frequently prompted students to generate their own examples to flesh out definitions of concepts found in the readings. She also encouraged students to use their own ideas as a basis for selecting a thesis.

> Q: How do you expect them to use the source materials and their own ideas on the topic?
>
> A: . . . I think that unless they approach the assignment very mechanically, they really should have some ideas of their own about this, and they should feel free to put those ideas in the paper. *I mean even in the--we've given them three different theorists and an example and have asked them to pick, out of all that, what they think best explains this guy's racism--then that's their own idea, and they make that choice. It should be their own idea. Unless, of course, they were mechanically going about fulfilling the assignment and picked what they thought would be the easiest or whatever.* So even though it was an assignment, in the we way it was worded, that called for a sort of canned thesis, I would hope that it would be *their thesis*. . . (Teacher interview, 3/19)

Commenting on Tina's draft, she suggested, "Try to select only those points you feel interested in." This strategy can provide students with a quick and efficient way to select information from the sources. It can also ensure that students will have an interest in the arguments they set forth. Yet, its disadvantage is that it may simplify the task and short-circuit the careful analysis, comparison, and testing of the assigned theories against positive and negative examples in the C.P. Ellis story. This kind of testing can also serve as a basis for selecting and supporting a thesis.

Beyond this use of personal ideas—as a means to understand the sources and as a way to choose a thesis—the instructor encouraged students to include their own reactions to the source texts as a way to add interest to the paper. After praising Leslie's neatly organized argument, for example, her only comment was that the paper was a bit "cut and dried" and needed more "oomph":

> I get the feeling that you're kind of afraid to cut loose and *put your own interest in it* . . . . As you write it *don't hold back when you feel interested and want to say something and comment on something.* As long as it's staying within the boundaries that you've set up in that paragraph, go ahead and do it. *You know--this in incredibly sad, or this is awful and here's why. Put a little bit of that in there. . . . It would make it a more readable paper* (Response, Leslie's draft).

But in discussing the two failed norming essays (Kiesha's and Elizabeth's papers), she conveyed that too much creativity could also be risky. She pointed out how personal ideas seemed to interfere with the support and organization of the argument in these

papers and seemed to preclude a thorough treatment of the source texts. She explained that Elizabeth's and Kiesha's papers were "interesting" and "alive," but:

> **Instructor:** . . . I knew what my colleagues would be doing, and in fairness--I sound like I'm rapping them and I'm not really--they want to see that you can read stuff out of the text, think about it, inject your own ideas in it, and articulate all this in an organized way, in a well supported way. . . (Class, 4/6)

In the excerpts that follow, an interesting dichotomy emerged. While the instructor condoned the use of personal ideas as a way to create interest, she and the students recognized that this strategy could be at odds with other important criteria—to be organized, to present a relevant thesis, and to use the source texts as support. They recognized that integrating and managing these goals was difficult. Here, the students articulated this dichotomy to either use your own ideas creatively and fail or give a boring report and pass:

> **Rita:** They want it to be boring--
> **Others:** Yeah, yeah, boring reports.
> **Instructor:** What's that?
> **Others:** Boring.
> **Tina:** It's a report.
> **Shari:** I'd rather write like that any day.
> **Tina:** Give 'em what they want.
> **Shari:** Give em what they want.
> **Tina:** Give 'em what they want, they're in charge (laughs).
> **Instructor:** . . . They don't want it to be boring either. They want it to be what Kiesha's doing--enthusiasm, insight, ideas--but they wanted support, o.k.? And then something like the pattern that Leslie's using. . .
> **Tina:** They want everything. (Class 4/6)

Finally, the instructor suggested that, if students had trouble juggling all of these requirements, they might be better off to simplify the task and leave their own ideas out of the text entirely:

> **Elizabeth:** This is my chance to write the way I like. It says YOUR THESIS
> . . . . and I thought, I'm thinking the way those books--guys--set it up in the way they want--
> **Others:** Right, right.
> **Tina:** It's not set up, like, to morons.
> **Others:** Uh-huh, mm-hmm.
> **Elizabeth:** . . . and I knew it [norming essay 4] was going to fail.
> **Instructor:** But it's an interesting paper.
> **Elizabeth:** But you can't have interesting.
> **Instructor:**. . . . It's interesting, but does it present a theory as to why prejudice exists, or does it just describe prejudice and kind of mention a theory here and there, see ? . . . . It's not coming together as a series of assertions about racism and where it comes from
> . . . . And it's a lot harder to do that intellectually than it is to like, you know, wind'er up and just let it go. But that winding it up and letting it go is more fun, so what the hell do you do? You wind it up, let it go, look at it and go, o.k., I got to support this, this should be moved around here, I need to bring in some some stuff that I've read that made me say this so I can show the reader where I'm coming from. You see?
> **Tina:** . . . . Like Kiesha said, when you're writing and when you're trying to do like they were doing, like out of your head, just write your own, you start--oh--then you remember this and

then you remember that. But when you organize it like a report ,you don't have to think and you don't have to screw your paper up--it's easier.
Instructor: So you play it safe.
Tina: Yeah.
Instructor: If you have to err on one side or the other--if you want me to give you some direction on that--it's better to err on the side of being too safe and doing the boring report than it is to err on the side of being too creative. Because both papers got zapped for being too creative, o.k.? But that's not the only reason . . . .They want you to support your ideas in an orderly way, o.k.? (Class, 4/6)

In sum, the instructor expected students to have some personal commitment to the theses they defended. While explication of their personal reasons or experiences was not required in their texts, she assumed that these personal views should inform their decision to align themselves with an author's theory or a set of concepts. But her comments also indicated that it was quite legitimate to include personal feelings on the topic as a way to supplement the text and add interest. These expectations were not necessarily at odds with the reviewers' comments. Even though the reviewers failed both essays which included a fair amount of personal commentary, they did so because these texts did not deal with the assigned sources. The review board's comments suggested that these texts came closer to personal response writing than to the assigned task. Thus, the use of one's own ideas in the text itself was not presented as a requirement of the task but as an optional move, and one that carried with it some risk.

The role of text comprehension in school-based argument

As Applebee (1984) has noted, school-based writing is often used as a way to test understanding of assigned readings. Although three reviewers' comments praised students' knowledge of the theories, the instructor revealed how understanding the source texts was simply one step in the larger process of persuading a reader: "Yes [in writing your arguments] I'd like you to use the book, but I don't want to read a summary of what Allport and Loewenberg and Boggs say (Class, 3/16)."
In her taped response to four of the nine students' drafts, she commented on questionable interpretations of source texts or blatant misreadings of them (e.g., Tina confused Studs Terkel, the interviewer, with C.P. Ellis, the Klansman). She explained, ". . .when you make a mistake like that, it's real hard for any reader who knows what the real story is to have a lot of confidence in some of your statements and some of your interpretation. . . . it kind of casts doubt on everything in the
paper.. . "(Response, Tina's draft).

This analysis revealed the importance of examining the full range of criteria that emerge in an argument context. Although some criteria may seem secondary and irrelevant to argument, they may have an important and complex relationship to criteria that are more obviously central. For example, following the conventions of a school essay (e.g., introducing a thesis in the introduction and following with key topic sentences for each body paragraph) may not seem like a particularly important criterion of argument, but a closer look at the instructor's pedagogy revealed that this essay format was actually an heuristic, offering students a guideline and set of prompts for including relevant claims, including source concepts, and elaborating on their evidence in appropriate paragraphs.

Looking at this interconnected web of criteria has revealed the particular nature of argument in the context of this college classroom. It has shown that argument in this context shares some features of argument we might find in these students' personal lives and some features that we might associate with scholarly or academic argument. But the reviewers' criteria illustrated that the arguments expected in the context of this classroom were distinct from both advocacy and scholarly argument. Unlike advocacy, this school-based argument required the writers to go beyond supplying a claim and self-evident bits of proof. As in scholarly argument, they were expected to construct an elaborate argument, with claims, evidence, and explicit warrants. But because these students were in the process of learning scholarly argument, the expectations were not equivalent. The instructor anticipated that it would difficult for students to infer and construct criteria for selecting and choosing evidence, so she simplified the task, providing students with simple text format and selection strategies (choose positive examples, choose what you agree with). In addition, students were not criticized for failing to consider counterevidence and rival hypotheses, because it might have interfered with other task demands. This school-based argument seemed to be a precursor to scholarly argument—a negotiated and limited version of it that would be manageable for students.

Finally, this look at readers' criteria shows us that an argument context, even this institutionalized context with its history and established goals, does not maintain a uniform set of criteria that somehow provide a stable background for writers. Inasmuch as writers themselves negotiate the criteria and goals of argument in any situation, so do the readers and evaluators of those arguments. These teachers and reviewers seemed to be negotiating their expectations of argument based on their own assumptions about what students could achieve and what they themselves valued. Although the reviewers and teacher in this context did seemed to share a number of goals and criteria, there were clear differences. For example, while the teacher herself seemed to place a high value on students' personal experience and ideas, she recognized (and quite rightly so) that the review board might not value these ideas in students' texts. In response to this concern, she provided some ways for students to use their own experiences without compromising themselves.

Students' Purposes and Goals: Data Collection and Analysis

How well did these criteria map on to the purposes and goals students perceived in this argument task? In order to summarize and compare students' interpretations to those of the instructor and review board, we conducted a retrospective interview immediately after they had turned in the first draft of the paper, but before they had received any response from the instructor. (See Appendix C for the full list of interview questions). With text in hand, students were asked to review their planning and writing of this draft. Two particular questions (#1 and #3), which focused on students' purposes and goals, allowed us to assess whether students were attending to the reviewers' seven criteria, and whether they had recognized any additional purposes and goals not suggested by those criteria:

This interview was transcribed and each conversational turn was numbered. We generated abbreviated descriptions of students' goals and purposes from their responses to questions 1 and 3. For example, Tina's goals were abbreviated in the following way:

Tina

- (2) To have a thesis, to have topic sentences that support your thesis, and examples and anything else that would support the topic sentences in each paragraph.
- (4) Over 600 words
- (6) That we write our own thoughts in it also, as well as what we learned from just reading.

This abbreviated list was taken from her full response to Question 1:

> 1.Q:. . .First of all, if you had to list five things that you thought [your teacher] wanted you to do on this paper, what would they be? What were the five most important things?
> 2.A: To have a thesis. To have, um, topic sentences that support your thesis. And, uh, examples. And, uh, anything else that would support the, um, topic sentences in each paragraph, in each body paragraph.
> 3.Q: Topic sentences in each paragraph. Is there anything else you can think of?
> 4.A: Over 600 words (laughs)
> 5.Q: Okay.
> 6. A: That we write our own thoughts in it also, as well as what we learned from the reading, our own experiences, our own views, I guess.

Working with the abbreviated lists, Higgins and the co-coder marked each response, using a seven-part scheme. Two of the reviewers' seven criteria, "proper use of local text conventions" and "proper use of global text conventions," were collapsed into one category "proper use of text conventions." Thus, six of the categories corresponded to the reviewers' criteria. We also included a seventh coding category, labeled "other," to locate and count purposes or goals that did not map onto the six criteria. In some instances, responses were double-coded. For example, consider Tina's first response:

> • (2) To have a thesis, to have topic sentences that support your thesis, and examples and anything else that would support the topic sentences in each paragraph.

This response included a number of goals that corresponded to two different criteria. Her goals to have a thesis, to have examples, and to include topic sentences corresponded to the category of "using proper text conventions" and her goals to support the thesis and topic sentences corresponded to the category of "developing support." Thus, this response was double coded. Tina's second response included only one goal, which was to write "over 600 words." This goal did not correspond to any of the reviewer's criteria, and so was singly coded as "other."

After coding the data independently, we met to determine reliability and to negotiate any disagreements in coding. Using pairwise comparison, we determined that we had reached 97% agreement on our coding of student goals and 92% agreement on student purposes.

Similarities and Discrepancies in Reviewers' and Writers' Criteria: Observations

In the interviews, seven of the nine students mentioned the need to *use the source texts*. Of the reviewers' seven criteria, this was the most frequently mentioned by students, and yet students described the use of source texts in very diverse ways, e.g., "interweaving," "comparing and contrasting," "relating," and"referring to," the assigned articles.

Six students said that one goal of the task was to *learn about the concepts found in the reading*, or, as Kiesha put it, "to get an understanding on their (the authors') points." Responses of this type indicated that students recognized text comprehension as an important criterion. Although the instructor seemed to understand this criterion as a precursor to writing a good argument, some students saw it as an end in itself. For these students, the assignment was a take home exam of sorts. Elizabeth explained,". . .that's the way of testing, almost."

Six students recognized the need to create a relevant thesis, stating that one goal was to *answer the question*, pick out the theories that were important, or provide an explanation of Ellis's racism as the task required. In this way they recognized that the task involved a decision and response that went beyond summarizing all they had read.

Five students expressed the need to abide by, learn, or *demonstrate proper use of text conventions*. For example, Elizabeth explained that the purpose of this paper was "to learn how to set up a paper that way," and other students suggested that organization, checking mistakes, and including topic sentences were important goals.

Five of the nine students indicated that an important part of the task was to incorporate their own feelings into the text. This was somewhat surprising; although the instructor seemed to sanction the use of personal ideas, she did so cautiously, presenting this as an option. Moreover, some reviewers seemed to view the use of personal ideas in a negative light. Students did discuss this goal in conjunction with the use of source texts, however, showing that they were sensitive to the need to stick with the assigned readings while incorporating their own ideas. As Tina put it, an important goal was "to write our own thoughts in it also, as well as what we learned from the reading," and Helen's purpose was to work the theories in with her feelings.

And finally, five students alluded to the criterion of developing claims, stating that an important goal of the task was to "support" and "explain" the main points. If students often failed to elaborate on their claims, at least these students recognized the need to do so.

Although this analysis suggested some overlap between students' and instructors' images of this task, the coding also revealed some divergences as well. All nine students discussed at least one purpose or goal that did not correspond to the reviewers' criteria. These "other" goals are briefly summarized in Figure 7.

Some students saw this assignment as "paperwork"; their primary purpose was to get a grade and produce the required 600 words. And yet, for several students, this task had a great deal of personal meaning. As working class women returning to school and redefining their life goals and relationships, they seemed to use the issues in this class to make sense of their own personal histories and to understand their relationship to other women in the class. In that this was a multicultural classroom, the topic of racism was particularly sensitive. Several women, like Helen, said that their purpose was to "understand and be aware of our own prejudice." This goal seems importantly distinct from simply understanding or learning the authors' theories, but suggests that these women were applying and using their arguments for the purposes of self-discovery and personal inquiry. As Kiesha, an African American student put it, the assignment was helping her ". . . come to terms with what racism is and how it affected my life." Rita,

discovered she "had some deep-rooted prejudice [ner]self." And perhaps because these women were forming a supportive community, some of them claimed that influencing their classmates as readers was also an important goal for the paper. Helen, who in small discussion groups had begun to form a friendship with Kiesha, explained that her purpose in this paper was "to be real careful" because she "didn't want to step on anybody's toes or make it sound really prejudiced."

STUDENT	PURPOSES & GOALS CORRESPONDING TO REVIEWERS' CRITERIA						OTHER PURPOSES & GOALS
	SRC	UND	REL	TC	ORIG	DEV	
HELEN	•		•		•		• not offend reader; understand own prejudice
TINA	•			•	•	•	• get grade; 600 words
KATE				•	•	•	• persuade reader
DANA	•	•	•				• get grade; don't argue against it
ELIZABETH	•	•		•		•	• it's paperwork
RITA	•	•	•	•	•	•	• learned I was prejudice
LESLIE	•	•	•	•	•		• see that there's more than one meaning of things
SHARI	•	•	•				• write about real world issues
KIESHA		•	•			•	• understand effect on me; get to unconscious thoughts

KEY:

TC = TEXT CONVENTIONS
REL = RELEVANT CLAIMS
DEV = DEVELOPMENT OF CLAIMS
SRC = USE SOURCES
ORIG = USE OF ORIGINAL IDEAS
UND = UNDERSTAND SOURCES
OTHER = PURPOSE/GOAL DOES NOT CORRESPOND TO CRITERIA

FIGURE 7: CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES IN STUDENTS' AND REVIEWERS' INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ARGUMENT TASK

The process of invoking the standards of an argument field is by no means a straightforward one; in "reading" a rhetorical situation, writers construct their own representations of a task. As these students illustrate, writers may only recognize some of the goals understood by their readers, or they may bring their own purposes and goals to the task. Moreover, these students' brief description of their goals suggested that the criteria they recognized were ambiguous. Use of personal ideas was sometimes seen as desirable and sometimes not, and the way in which writers were to use the sources was interpreted differently.

3. What strategies did students use to enact and negotiate the goals they perceived?

Although it might be quite possible to examine the full range of strategies students used to carry out the various goals they had recognized, it seemed more useful to examine their strategies for reaching their most problematic and challenging goals. We examined students' responses to Question 9 in the interview (Was this a hard assignment? What made it easy or difficult for you?), and also reviewed the questions and frustrations students most frequently voiced in class. We discovered that two specific goals appeared quite central yet problematic for students—the goal to use their "own ideas" and the goal to "use the source texts."

In responding to this question, the writers seemed uncertain about how to manage the source materials. For example, although Dana wanted to include a number of source ideas, she explained,". . . you got to pick out the most important parts" and ". . .it was hard for me to condense it and make sense." (Dana, 166). Kiesha also expressed concern about managing and synthesizing the ideas she had read: "I have a lot of ideas, and how to separate them and eliminate them is what I'm having a lot of trouble with also"(Kiesha, 193). Although Leslie knew that she wanted to use Loewenberg and Allport, she wasn't sure how to transform their ideas into her own argument, whether she should "include the titles of their articles or what they wrote."(Leslie, 142). It is almost surprising that none of these students reported difficulty selecting a thesis or concepts for their essay; however, they did find it hard to transform and adapt these concepts into a coherent and concise argument, even though the instructor had provided them with an essay format for slotting source information into their texts.

In discussing the difficulties of this assignment, students also recognized that their own impulse to understand and express their ideas and opinions on racism was often at odds with other task requirements, and many struggled to find a place for their own ideas or an adequate way of extricating them. Tina explained that her biggest problem was not having enough evidence to support her own view of racism. Shari felt uncomfortable writing about a set of source materials she found uninteresting, explaining, " [If] she [the instructor] wanted mine, I would have given her a whole different story. But that's not what she wanted, so I couldn't do it" (Shari, 130). And Kiesha had to keep reminding herself that ". . . there's things and questions I have to ask, I wanted to ask. And even to directly ask other female students in the class, but I said this is an English class, so we cannot ask these questions. Kiesha's main problem was trying to "hold things back" (Kiesha, 183). Elizabeth found the C. P Ellis story unpersuasive, explaining that it contradicted her own experiences with racism in the South. She said, rather wistfully, "If I could just take my own ideas, take part of the thing, and then put my own ideas with it and explain it. I have a better time doing that than [using only] the books. I always feel like I see things different than the books say" (Elizabeth, 170).

The comparison of student goals and reviewer criteria in this context and the brief inventory of the difficulties they encountered have suggested some potentially interesting points of tension and negotiation. In particular, this analysis raised questions about the particular strategies students used to enact the goals of using sources and using their own ideas. In what follows, we investigate the strategies and negotiations that emerged as students used the source concepts and their own ideas, focusing on the following questions: To what extent did students use the sources and their own ideas? How were

these ideas transformed and used in constructing an argument? And what were the particular constraints and problems students encountered as they attempted to use these ideas?

Strategies for using prior knowledge in school argument: Data collection and analysis

In order to examine students' strategies for using their own ideas[1], we examined interview Question 2, in which they described how they had attempted to carry out each of their goals, Questions 5 and 7, in which they discussed the steps they took in arriving at a thesis and key pieces of evidence in their text, and Question 8, which was a specific prompt asking students if and how their own ideas had come into play as they read, thought about, or wrote their arguments. Although we had not initially planned to include this specific question about the use of personal knowledge, it became apparent in classroom discussions that the use of personal ideas was a key issue for many students, and so this question was later added. Our observations in the classroom helped refine the questions and underscore key sites of conflict.

After listening to these responses, we inferred a set of strategies students had employed for using their own ideas. Three of the strategies were texts moves; some students indicated that they had somehow employed their own ideas in the argument draft itself. Because of this, we examined all nine of the drafts, to see if these texts moves appeared and to look for any other explicit use of personal ideas in text that had not been mentioned by students. To assess which of these strategies were most and least common across the students, we developed a table, using the six different strategies as headings, and checking off those strategies that were mentioned at least once during each student's interview or which appeared in the text itself, marking particular examples in text.

In descriptive research of this sort, the researcher certainly does not approach such data objectively. We had a number of expectations about how their own ideas might be used given our classroom observations, our knowledge of relevant research on prior knowledge, and our discussions with the instructor. We suspected that the students would map their own experiences onto the new information they were reading, in order to understand it. We also suspected that some students might use their own experiences with racism to evaluate the source texts and to elaborate on source ideas in reading and writing. Since argument involves connecting data around a claim, we suspected that students' personal knowledge might either be used to create inferences and logical transitions between ideas. Although we recognized these potential uses of personal knowledge, we were not certain about the extent to which or the particular ways in which elaboration would play itself out in students' reading, planning and writing for this argument task, especially since some of the students had explicitly discussed a tension between their ideas and the articles they read.

---

[1] In this context, we take "own ideas" to mean students' personal experiences, examples, opinions or prior knowledge about racism (including ideas learned from other texts) that do not appear explicitly in the four source texts. We do not mean to suggest that this imported information is wholly original to the students (they do not "own" these ideas); however we choose to use this term in that it had some resonance for the students themselves. They often used the phrases "my own opinions" or "my ideas" when referring to information that they brought to bear on topic, whether they had gleaned those ideas from other classes or from their own or others' life experiences.

Strategies for using Prior knowledge in school argument: Observations

From our close reading of the interviews, we inferred six different ways in which students had used their own ideas:

- understanding the sources (while reading)
- explaining/elaborating on the sources for a reader (in text)
- expressing personal feelings about racism (in text)
- selecting a thesis, the best source concepts (while reading)
- generating rival hypotheses in response to sources (while reading)
- using rival hypotheses to support or discredit concepts (in text)

Some of these strategies corresponded to our expectations, while others did not (e.g., one strategy was to express personal *feelings* about racism, which was somewhat surprising, given the assignment).

	Under-stand sources	Explain concepts in text	Express feelings in text	Select thesis/ concepts	Generate rival hypotheses	Use rival hypotheses in text
Shari	√		√		√	
Dana	√			√	√	
Kate	√			√		
Elizabeth	√	√			√	
Kiesha	√		√	√		
Rita	√		√	√		
Leslie	√		√		√	
Helen	√	√	√	√		
Tina	√		√		√	√
	---	---	---	---	---	---
TOTAL	9	2	6	5	5	1

FIGURE 8: WAYS IN WHICH STUDENTS USED THEIR "OWN IDEAS"

Figure 8 illustrates striking differences in the role that personal knowledge played in the development of these students' arguments. Some students seemed to rely heavily on personal knowledge as they selected and evaluated evidence for their texts, but for others, use of personal knowledge was limited to understanding the reading materials or responding to the topic.

Using prior knowledge to understand the source texts

As students read the source texts, they recalled personal experience and relevant knowledge that helped them understand new concepts such as displacement, projection, reference groups, and events described in the Ellis interview. When asked how her own ideas had come into play, for example, Leslie explained how personal experiences had helped her "relate" better to the theories of prejudice:

Leslie: *It's like displacement, I can relate to that.* You know when you're mad. Like, I have a little sister, and I was doing my homework, and she tries to write on your paper, and you know she likes you, she likes just helping me last night, and it drives me crazy. And I get really mad and say mean things to her. I say leave me alone, don't talk to me. *It's ignorant, but I'm mad because I have all this homework to do, and I'm taking it out on her because I wait to the last minute to do it, you know.*
Q: So you're really mad at yourself for waiting till the last minute.
Leslie: Right. You know, this poor little baby, you know. (Leslie, 132-134)

All nine students discussed this use of their own ideas, relating the sources to specific incidents or feelings they had experienced, or their knowledge of the way the world works. This strategy is common to any task that involves reading, for prior knowledge and experience play an integral role in the comprehension process, helping readers relate new concepts to what they already know and to flesh out gaps in their understanding by drawing inferences from their own knowledge base (Reder, 1980; Langer, 1984; Collins, Brown, & Larkin, 1980). These inferences and elaborations can play a useful role in argument, especially if they entail general knowledge, for the writer can use them to establish warrants, shared assumptions that she and her reader can refer to as a basis for assessing claims about the data. This use of prior knowledge is reflected in the following strategy.

Using prior knowledge to explain concepts to the reader

It is not surprising that students used prior knowledge to understand the source texts. Yet, what may seem surprising is that these ideas rarely made it into students' texts, where they had the potential to serve as warrants, and to elaborate on the concept definitions so that a reader might better see their connection to experiences in Ellis' life. Only two students used their own examples in this way. In one of these cases, Helen attempted to elaborate on Boggs' theory (economic competition among the lower classes causes racism) at the end of her draft by including her own example of tensions between Korean immigrants and whites in Waltham, Mass.

Helen explained this example:

Q: Where'd you get this? Is this --
Helen: This is something that's going on right now, *I read this in the newspaper.*
Q: The thing about the 45% of the district is Korean. So you read that, and as you're reading the newspaper you kind of started thinking about Boggs again, and--
Helen: *Yea, there you go again, there's the system. You know, one example.* Yea, people, they come in and they get everything. They get their lunch, they get everything paid for, everything down to babysitting, childcare, everything. And then you have people, white people, we're going to use that for an example, could be other black people, too. But they come in, they're struggling to pay their tuition. And there you've got a prejudice right there. You know, just like these people. They're getting everything handed to them. ..nd we have to fight for everything we get. Now see, *but that's the system, it's not the people's fault.* But we have a tendency to project all that onto that person, which makes us hate them. Before we even know them. (Helen, 77-80)

Even though only two explicit examples appeared in the texts, it may overly simplistic, to assume that the examples generated so frequently in reading had no effect whatsoever on writers' texts. In some cases, it seemed quite plausible that students' elaborations may have affected the explanation they did provide. Although Leslie's paper did not include the homework example she had used to understand displacement, it is easy to see the effect of that example: ". . . I have all this homework to do and *I'm taking it out on her* because I wait

to the last minute to do it. . .", and, in the text, she later wrote ". . . In this case Ellis is *taking his anger out* on the blacks. His anger is caused by the upper class people in his society, but he chooses to blame it on the blacks." Perhaps creating an analogous situation from her own experience gave Leslie the words and key relationships she needed to effectively communicate this concept to a reader. It is curious, though, that students did not take advantage of personal examples and illustrations more often, especially since a number of them, in discussing the strengths and weaknesses of their supporting evidence, noted that their definitions and support often needed to "go further" as Dana put it (70). As we shall see, this gap between the writers' thinking about the sources and the actual texts they produced is a pattern that became quite apparent in their interviews.

Expressing personal feelings about racism

Another way in which students used their own ideas was to include their personal feelings or reactions to racism in their texts. Six students used this strategy by tacking a personal response paragraph onto the end of their papers. Following are paragraphs from two of the six students who did so.

> . . . Possibly, if we could understand our own prejudice, as C.P .Ellis came to understand his, there could be an elimination of the whole concept of prejudice. Even though C.P. Ellis completely transformed, there needs to be a number of transformations to eliminate prejudice and racism today. My greatest hope is that someday prejudice and racism will be memories only and not a reality. However, I don't think I will see this occurrence in my lifetime. (Rita's draft)

> Furthermore as long as we still have social and economic inferiority we will continue to have racism and prejudice. However it is possible to overcome these as Ellis did. People have to realize that differences in religion, race or ethnic backgrounds shouldn't be a reason for hatred. . . (Shari's draft)

Although these concluding paragraphs responded to (and sermonized about) the evil effects of racism, they seemed to have little relationship to the actual arguments students had set forth in the body of their papers, arguments concerning the causes of Ellis's racism. It is interesting to note, however, that some students saw the final opinion paragraph as a legitimate part of the text, an appropriate place to insert commentary. Some alluded to their reading class in which they were specifically required to write reactions at the end of their written summaries:

> **Leslie:** I had a lot of trouble with that because I didn't know how to conclude all that un, and then just like, because in like reading class we all used to write two paragraphs and like the conclusion paragraph you have to write like your reaction . . . (Leslie, 72)

> **Kiesha:** At the end I'm pretty much saying that I'm not going to tolerate this being passed on to my children, generation to generation. You know, refuse to accept their class structure of inferior, superior. And that's about all that I did say as my own opinion, and which I thought would be acceptable at the end, because in most papers you can, at the end, write your own opir ion. (Kiesha, 100)

Kiesha and Leslie were the only two students to express personal reactions elsewhere in their texts, and these were very brief. For example, after illustrating how Ellis had displaced his anger on blacks, Leslie commented. "This was a bad thing to do. . ." As we can see, personal

reaction was not integrated with students' arguments; their reactions did little to support, qualify, or challenge the claims and concepts offered in the writers' papers. This move to include personal reaction may be understood as more of a response to the conventions of school essay writing in general than to this specific argument assignment, and, as we shall see, it may have provided what students perceived as the only acceptable outlet for including their personal views in the essay itself.

But we might also account for this seemingly irrelevant move by examining the social context a bit more closely. The expression of personal feelings is not critical to argument per se, but it may be effective in situations where the arguer's character and motivations must be established. Given the fact that these students regularly read and discussed their writing within this tightly-knit, multicultural classroom, testifying to one's personal stance on racism might conceivably be a prerequisite for arguing about the topic, especially if the students perceived their fellow classmates as a potential audience for the paper.

Using prior knowledge to develop a thesis and select source concepts

The interviews revealed that students were not only basing their claims on the source data provided, but on the data of their own experience—personal scenarios and examples of racism that were not apparent in the texts they read. Five students explained that they had used personal belief or experience as a basis for assessing and selecting source concepts for inclusion in their arguments. These five students compared the theories to their own personal experience or beliefs; if a positive match was found, they chose to use that concept in their writing. Ultimately, the "best" theory or theories were those they most agreed with on a personal level. Kate was quite articulate about this selection process:

> **Q:** . . . How did you address her expectations in the paper? You mentioned a few things. One is to put your opinion in. How did you handle that?
> **Kate:** Okay, well *it was pretty clear to me after I read the assignments what I agreed with, what I didn't agree with.* (Kate, 7-8)
>
> (And later)
>
> **Q:** Okay. And your opinions, those are examples from your own life, your experiences. And your opinions, you say, did work themselves in. I'm trying to figure out how. What the--
> **Kate:** *Just by the fact that I feel economics is the main cause of racism. That's my opinion.*
> **Q:** And that strongly influenced your thesis?
> **Kate:** Right. *That was the thing I felt was the most important.* If I had one thing I had to get across, that was what I wanted to get across.
> **Q:** By the way, why do you believe that? You keep saying you believe that . . . .
> **Kate:** *I believe it because I see examples of it all the time.*
> **Q:** In your own life? So it wasn't necessarily that Boggs convinced you, or that he was a better arguer--?
> **Kate:** Well, you know, when you, in class if you talked to most of the people in there they tended to agree with that, and I can't speak for them, but *I think it was the easiest to understand because you do see it all the time.* Maybe you don't really think about it in that way, but when you've read Boggs you could say to yourself you say, yeah, I can understand it, sure. I think that's what did it for me. (Kate, 154-161)

Helen also used her own experiences with racism as a basis for selecting concepts:

Helen: . . . when I started to write about the paper I first started to think about how I felt, you know, how I was prejudiced, without even realizing it, and where that came into play in my life, and how I became that way. And then I brought the articles in that seemed to relate to the way I felt about the prejudice. And for me I could see where the projection, of course, was real prevalent, and the groupings also were important because my father was Italian, and Italians live with a lot of prejudice themselves, but they are very prejudiced themselves. Against blacks. And then I tried to think about where this all started, and, of course, I thought that Boggs's theory, of course, really supported that, where prejudice began, because of the dehumanization of the black people. You know, through the systematic capitalism. So that's what I did . . . (Helen, 2)

It is interesting to note that, while the assignment asked students to use Ellis as a test case, some students seemed to use their own life experience as the standard by which to assess the theories, although they varied in the extent to which personal experience dominated their assessment. We might expect these students to include some of these personal examples to either define the concepts or provide additional support for them, since this personal analogy constituted the true basis from which their arguments were constructed. As we have mentioned earlier, however, the students rarely used personal examples to define the concepts, and none of the students used personal experience to support or strengthen the concepts they defended.

Using prior knowledge to generate rival hypotheses

In the context of this task, a number of claims are possible, given the potential combinations of the concepts offered in source texts. Generating counterexamples, negative instances, and rival hypotheses, are strategies for advancing one claim over another, so we might have expected students to have engaged in this type of critique while reading and considering the three theories. In reading and in planning their texts, five students used their own ideas to generate rival hypotheses that challenged the source texts' claims about the causes of racism. A few students viewed the theorists' accounts as overly complex, opting for simpler explanations of racism that were tied to basic human emotions. Tina agreed that displacement might have explained racism years ago, but she felt that this concept did not account for race relations in contemporary society, which were, in her opinion, caused by simple jealousy. Shari saw Ellis's behavior not as systematic racism, but as a simple response to peer pressure, explaining that he was just "going with the flow."

Q: . . . Did you come across any evidence against your thesis, something that actually contradicted, either in the book, or in Ellis, or in your own life experience that contradicted these guys, that might lead you to believe, no, maybe they're really not really great theories?
Shari: You know what, *I don't think I could really consider what Ellis was going for was racism because I don't really think he knew what racism was, he just, he wasn't prejudiced, you know, as they [the authors] consider prejudice. He was going with the flow*, and then when he realized it's not what he wanted, he got out of it. Not everybody thinks that way of prejudice, you know. (Shari, 109-110)

Elizabeth raised some very strong objections to the sources. In particular, she challenged whether C.P. Ellis had really outgrown his racist feelings.

Elizabeth: . . .There was a question even in class. She said 'is he still prejudiced in any ways,' and I said 'yeah, he is.' Because he really took those prejudices and had them work for him. He kind of did to the whole damn bunch what he didn't want someone doing to him . . . .

in your mid-life you don't have this rude awakening and say yeah, I'm not going to be like that any more. (Elizabeth, 153)

She later referred to her own life experiences, which called Ellis's "transformation" into question:

> **Elizabeth:** . . *Anybody that's very racist or prejudice that I have ever known has never said I was wrong later in school, said, you know, they're not so bad after all.* I think they learn to adjust to being around them, but I don't think they ever accept them as equals. I don't think they ever do once it's in them. (Elizabeth, 165)

> **Elizabeth:** . . . I lived in the South, well, as a matter of fact, I was in the South right then when he was, in nineteen, in the seventies, right as he was changing over, in that, in Raleigh . . *. . And just from different things that I read when I was down there about political people, I think they're a whole bunch of shit. When they say they're helping people do stuff they're helping themselves get ahead, not the people.* (Elizabeth, 181)

Using rival hypotheses as support in the text

We might expect these rival hypotheses and personal counterexamples to emerge in students' texts, as a way to help them advance certain concepts over others or to explain why they had rejected some of the theories. We can see that Shari's idea of "going with flow" bears a close relationship to Allport's' concept of group norms. Tina' s discussion of jealousy and Elizabeth's explanation of Ellis's "getting ahead" and doing to blacks "what he didn't want someone doing to him" were, in fact, closely related to Boggs' account of economic competition among classes and might have been used to bolster her support of Boggs.

These rival hypotheses, however, did not appear explicitly in students' arguments. Tina was the only student to include rival hypotheses in her text, and she did not use this example of jealousies to strengthen the concepts she chose. In fact, it was not integrated with her presentation of the source concepts, but appeared at the end of her text.

> If there are prejudices against blacks Jew, Catholics, it is because of the jealousies one group of people have toward one another. For instance, I remember hearing people saying "why does that nigger have all that gold around his neck. How does he afford that fancy car. . . . " That person may be jealous because he must work every day and doesn't like seeing someone else sitting around doing nothing and having so much. (Tina's draft)

This separation is clearly apparent in the two-part thesis she produced, which simply juxtaposed the authors theories and her own views side by side without any real integration:

> After reading Lowenberg, Allport, and Boggs' theories about racism, you could say that they are seen in C.P. Ellis's interview with Studs Terkel. However, as a young woman living in the late twentieth century, I do not see either any of Lowenberg, Allport or Boggs theories of racism in my own experience. (Tina's draft)

Elizabeth's rival hypothesis was not only absent in the body of her text, where she advanced her support for these theories, but it seemed to have had no influence on her claims at all. Elizabeth's opening paragraph introduced the thesis, "Allport's group theories cover almost all of the changes C. P. went through." In subsequent paragraphs, she introduced several concepts from the Allport article—in-groups, outgroups, and reference groups—and showed how these groups explained Ellis's transformation. Her paper ends:

> The more C. P. worked with Ann and the other people he always hated the more he became aware of the fact that they were just like him . . . . he transformed himself into the person he always searched for, himself. (Elizabeth's draft)

This was another clear indication that some students use of their own ideas in reading and analyzing the sources did not transfer into the arguments they presented to a reader.

This brief inventory of students' strategies for using their own ideas suggests an interesting mismatch between the arguments they actually presented in their texts and the arguments they developed in the process of comprehending and analyzing the sources. Their chosen concepts, which they had defined and elaborated for themselves in reading, were sometimes not defined at all in the text. This is curious since, as we have noted earlier in this chapter, students themselves recognized that their definitions and examples in the text needed to be fleshed out further.

Those students who used their own life experience to evaluate and select the theories did not use it explicitly in the text as support, but confined themselves to C. P. Ellis, even when, in some cases, their reasoning was not entirely based on Ellis. Their process of analysis seemed distinctly cut off from their presentation of evidence. Thus, these writers' underelaborated reasoning and sporadic or irrelevant use of supporting examples in their texts did not result from a lack of reasoning or analysis of these texts, but was perhaps due from this lack of transfer.

Although a number of students generated rival hypotheses that might have helped them qualify their claims and explain their preferences, these rival hypotheses were notably absent in their texts, as well, and, in some cases (e.g., Elizabeth's), they appear to have had no impact on the claims presented. Students clearly kept their ideas at a safe distance from the text, with the exception of the opinions they expressed in their summary paragraphs. These opinions did not constitute rival hypotheses or even support for the concepts, however; they were simple statements about the evils of racism which seemed irrelevant to the theses presented in their texts.

This analysis of strategies further explains the nature of the data, warrant, and claims in these students' texts, as described in our earlier analysis. Specifically, it suggests that the underelaborated warrants, sporadic data, and absence of counterevidence in the texts may be partly rooted in students' separation of their elaboration and analysis of the sources and their actual use and presentation of the sources in their written arguments. Although this analysis can illustrate this curious dichotomy, a look at strategies alone cannot explain *why* this dichotomy emerged.

We do know that students had received mixed signals about the use of their own ideas, that they also had to juggle a number of other important goals for this assignment, and that they themselves recognized that the goals of using their own ideas and the

sources were difficult objectives and were sometimes at odds. We will illustrate that the strategies these students employed—in understanding, analyzing, and using the sources to argue—were a negotiated response to specific conflicts they perceived in these goals. We will examine two students, Kiesha and Elizabeth, who approached the source texts quite differently, given the goals they emphasized and the conflicts they recognized.

Strategies for using source texts: Data collection and analysis

In examining students' strategies for using the source texts, we conducted two case studies. The case studies allowed us to conduct a more fine-grained and integrated analysis of students' strategies as they related to the various and sometimes contradictory set of goals they perceived in this argument situation. In this context, we thought it might be informative to examine students with different sets of goals. We chose one student who had clearly set the goal of self discovery (Kiesha) and had used her own ideas extensively. The other student, Elizabeth, had shown more concern for presenting an organized synthesis of the sources. Personal knowledge had not played a large role in her selection of source data.

In each case, we examined the range of goals these students had recognized (responses to Questions 1 and 3) and then with these goals in mind, we examined the specific strategies they had used in selecting and linking the source data. For this part of the descriptive analysis, we relied on responses to Questions 2, 4, and 5, in which students identified their thesis and three supporting pieces of evidence in their texts, discussing when and how they had arrived at that choice of evidence.
Their explanations of these choices as reflected in these responses and their responses to the more explicit questions about the difficulties and alternatives they encountered (as indicated in responses to Questions 6 - 9) revealed that they had recognized and negotiated a number of alternatives and conflicts in the situational and personal resources available to them, and in turn, had revised both their strategies and goals as they developed their arguments. These portraits of evolving strategies, goals, and decisions illuminate not only how their constructive processes differed, but how their processes influenced the general and more specific patterns we observed in their texts.

Kiesha's goals: racism as a personal problem

Kiesha identified three different goals for this assignment: to come to terms with racism in her own life, to explain Ellis' racism, and to understand the three theorists:

> **Kiesha:** *Describe racism. For me, come to terms with what racism is, and how it affected my life.*
> **Q:** So that's your kind of--your purpose?
> **Kiesha:** Yeah, right.
> **Q:** Do you think she (the instructor) wanted that purpose too, did she...?
> **Kiesha:** In a way she can't help but. Because, in other words, I couldn't look at it from a white point of view, which would be, a lot of them like I noticed were oblivious to racism. Being that I live in it, I can't separate it. So it would have to be like my opinion too. I have to come to grips with, as to why I'm in the position I'm in, according to race. *Justifying Ellis's reasons for being inbred racism, why he was trying to come out of it-- I think that's what we were looking at also.*
> **Q:** So also explain C. P.'s development or whatever. If he did develop. That's a good question.

> **Kiesha:** Yeah that kind of question. Okay, the three theories of Allport, Loewenberg, and Boggs, looking at it from their points of view. . . . so, *trying to get an understanding on their points.* (Kiesha, 2-8)

First and foremost, Kiesha seemed to use the assignment to help her understand the causes of racism in her own life. The privileging of this particular goal became apparent as the interview unfolded. As an African American woman, Kiesha had witnessed and experienced a great deal of racism and sexism. She returned to these incidents again and again as she described her reasons for choosing Boggs and Loewenberg. She related a number of stories about her parents' treatment by white employers, her anger at the way blacks were portrayed in the media, and how her own children had been treated unfairly. These anecdotes were not peripheral but were quite central to the task she had shaped for herself, to explain and understand these perplexing events.

> **Kiesha:** Me, like I said, I grew up with it [racism]. The only thing that makes me really angry is that I'm trying to-- *How do you explain to your children that you're seen as an inferior race? And therefore limited, you know? And I refuse to tell them that.* But that's what, every time you turn around, is being shown to you, so that's what brings up my anger. (Kiesha, 38)

Kiesha's emphasis on understanding racism in her own life suggested that she had defined the issue not so much as an academic exercise, i.e., Why was C.P. Ellis a racist?, but as a personal problem. Her personal take on this issue underscores a point made earlier—goals are not *given by* situations, nor are they *brought to* situations by the writer. Rather, goals are constructed *in situ*; they emerge at the intersection of expectations, prior knowledge, and available resources. In this case, the writer had, for some time been trying to work out the reasons for discrimination in her life. The theories she read gave her a resource for understanding what she had not been able to figure out herself and provided an opportunity to shape an explanation that she could offer her own children. Her goal to use the sources to "come to grips" with her position was constructed out of this situation, where resources, opportunities, and prior concerns converged.

Kiesha's goals illustrate that a writer's participation in an argument situation is not accurately described in terms of adapting to a set of fixed criteria. Students defined the issue they addressed by interpreting the teacher's cues about these criteria in tandem with goals they constructed. Kiesha clearly saw some potential overlap in her own desire to understand racism and what she perceived as the instructor's desire encourage students to develop personal awareness:

> **Q:** Any other purposes you thought [teacher] had, in assigning this kind of paper?
> **Kiesha:** I wondered that. I said, now she knew this was going to be touchy, you know. She sat back there with that red hair and innocent face and was just like, you know, keeping a blank expression, and *I just saw her dying to read the papers to find out what peoples conscious or unconscious thoughts are about racism.* Because you know we have a conscious thought of racism, but your unconscious is what's important. . .
> (Kiesha, 13-14)

Kiesha's strategies: Using personal experience as a test case

In order to describe the writers' strategies for choosing source concepts , we examined the evidence they had pointed out and their explanations of how they had arrived at that

evidence. Kiesha chose to defend Loewenberg's concepts of displacement and projection and Boggs' theory of economic competition, pointing out two key places in her text where she had used the sources to support her thesis. She first identified part of her second paragraph, which treated Loewenberg's concept of displacement:

> Searching within for a way to release his mounting anger he wanted to hate America but as he put it It's hard to do because you can't see it to hate." Instead he chose to unleash his anger out on "black Americans for reasons he justified as Loewenberg puts it as "displacement" because blacks are looked upon as less threatening and more accessible than the true source of his anger. Ellis sites it as "a natural to hate Blacks." History gives an example of displacement to further support Loewenberg's theory during 1882-1930 blacks were lynched in the South because of the decline of cotton which brought economic hardship to whites with a need to release their anger and frustration and being that blacks were considered inferior people and the property of whites, they were the natural choice to fall victims to the receive the back-lash. (Kiesha's draft)

Her second piece of support was part of a paragraph that centered on Boggs:

> Ellis then became aware that he along with his fellow Klans members were being used only to keep control of the blacks and were not seen as equal white men. With this knowledge Ellis learned that when it comes to color "green" is the color that makes the difference Money in fact was played a key role in establishing the Capitolistic system for which oppression and racial prejudice stands today. as sited by Bogg's theory white superiority vs.black inferiority" which benefitted white Americans from all class levels. (Kiesha's draft)

In the interview excerpts that follow, Kiesha discussed why she had chosen to focus on these particular concepts and theorists. In the first case, she chose displacement because it had personal relevance to an experience with her parents:

> **Q:** . . . If you had to tell me where these ideas [displacement] came from, where would they be?
> **Kiesha:** *Well, basically they came from the book, but when he was releasing his anger, instead of on an actual cause, I related that to personal experience, you know, because my parents would come home mad,* you know. But you really couldn't see the anger, you know, until you did something wrong. And we used to get like whippings. . . . *And then when I grew, I started looking, what I did wasn't that wrong to warrant two whippings, you know.* And then, one day, I went to work with my mother. You know, we went to pick her up early, and we were happy to see her. We ran up to her, and it was on purpose that her boss. . . turned around and said something to her, referred to her like, to do something, and she just went off duty. And he said, 'nigger if you don't get your ass in there,' just like that.
> **Q:** In front of you kids.
> **Kiesha:** In front of us, you know, and that's like demeaning. . . . I could see the hurt in their eyes that they were like limited as to what they can do, retaliate for that. And that's what I, instead of lashing out, having something to lash it out on, then when I went to say something to her she's like 'will you be quiet, I taught you this.' *And she smacked me.' And really she wanted to hit him. So I saw that displacement, I related that displacement to that.* (Kiesha, 139-142)

She had included Loewenberg's explanation of lynchings in the south (as an example of displaced anger) because it helped her understand the reasons why she and other blacks were "treated that way":

Q: So, some of this came from the book b:t, your reasons for including it had to do with your own--
Kiesha: *You mean for like homing in on it, you know, came definitely from personal relations, you know.* And when I, like I was telling [the instructor], when I read about the history example [in Loewenberg's text] given for lynching, I felt like mentioning this purely because, there may have been too many black men and they [the whites] were worried about their white women, or they would like, you know, they wanted to keep that in control, but when I--
Q: The population?
Kiesha: Yeah. And when I read this that they were being lynched also because of economic hardship, that they (whites) were angry and they wanted somebody to take it out on, not to say I justify this, but *I kind of breathed a sigh of relief, to understand that there were other reasons why we were treated that way.* (Kiesha, 147-150)

The particular paragraph she wrote on Boggs emerged from Kiesha's personal goal to understand discrimination:

Q: . . . where's it [Boggs] coming from?
Kiesha: *From the book and, then again, from my own personal experience, because it explained to me why I felt it necessary to bring blacks and use them as slaves or really as bargain chips for money, to boost their economy. And then why we stay the way we are and used the way we are, like menial jobs, the lack of promotions, in order to keep us at a certain level. So that we'd be kept separate, you know, the theory to support it.* (Kiesha 157-158)

Kiesha's thesis and her choice of concepts and details from both Loewenberg and Boggs, was clearly influenced by her own experience and her goal to understand racism in her own life. The concepts she chose were particularly attractive to Kiesha because they provided a palatable explanation of why whites sometimes mistreated blacks; Boggs did not fault blacks themselves nor did he paint whites as simply hateful, but placed blame on the economic system in which blacks and whites live:

Q: . . . But now prior to reading these guys, what was your view of the reasons for prejudice?
Kiesha: I didn't really, that's what I'm saying, *I didn't have an idea of actually why.*
Q: So this helped you understand--
Kiesha: *So this would have helped a lot*, yeah. That's what I say. *When I was reading this I breathed a sigh of relief knowing that they had some structure in their mind as to why.*
Q: So there's a reason, it's not just--?
Kiesha: *Yeah, they (whites) went about doing the things they did. Because history always just showed blacks've been taken over and . . . . it never showed why, how it helped the economy, the different types of anger that was unleashed. . . .* In the history they picture us, we always were weak, and no fight, no will for life. And they just brought us over and put us in the fields. *This showed that we had a culture, had a life, and had strength. You know, that it took a long time to break it. So this did fill in a lot . . . .* (Kiesha, 167-172)

Kiesha truly used her own life as the test for these theories. This was evident not only in her reasons for choosing the concepts, but her reasons for omitting some of the sources from her argument; she simply left out those concepts that she could not relate to:

Kiesha: *. . .[I chose] these two, I guess because they hit more to the core of how I feel and things that I was looking for, I related more to them. Whereas Allport, his was more like the scientific, clinical, white way of looking at things, you know.* His was, well 'we put group A over here and group B and this is why they can't mix,' and without really like getting to the soul of it like I felt Loewenberg and Boggs did. (Kiesha, 176)

Kiesha's negotiation of conflict

Kiesha was clearly opting for the streamlined process—choose concepts you agree with, find positive examples of these concepts in Ellis's life, and arrange them in separate paragraphs. Although the personal goal Kiesha addressed dominated her choice and omission of the source concepts, the goal of explaining C.P. Ellis's life began to come into focus as she tried to enact these choices in writing, and this presented her with a conflict. As she mined the Ellis interview for examples of displacement and class competition, she began to notice that Allport, whom she had rejected because of his white, detached approach to racism, actually did account for the types of groups to which Ellis belonged and the transitions he underwent. Faced with this conflict—to abide by her goal of selecting concepts she could use to explain racism in her own life or to select concepts that could explain racism in Ellis's life—she made the decision to "throw [Allport] in at the end, thus satisfying both objectives:

> Q: So you basically left Allport out. You're not going to deal with Allport?
> **Kiesha:** *Yeah. I think, though, I did throw him in at the end. Because, as I started writing I could see more of Allport's theory, really, overall, grasping C. P. Ellis all the way down the line, you know.* So if I had to write it all over again, I think I would use [Allport].
> Q: But you didn't initially because--
> **Kiesha:** *No, because I really didn't agree with him.* I thought he really had like a sterile point of view, really didn't get in depth. *But as I started breaking it down and looking at C.P. Ellis, point by point, Allport justified his whole, his whole reasoning of existence, really. . .* (Kiesha, 47-50)

This conflict in goals, and the way in which Kiesha negotiated it, might help us account for the irrelevant and sporadic support in her essay. Although her thesis reflected her personal decision about these authors, the anomalous paragraph on Allport was an unexplained concession to another goal she had recognized but not privileged—to use sources that explained Ellis's life. Kiesha's emphasis on her own experiences rather than Ellis's, may also account for her sporadic use of supporting examples from the Ellis interview. She provided no examples of C. P Ellis's projection, even though it was mentioned in her thesis.

Kiesha's own ideas facilitated her selection of a thesis and source concepts in reading and in planning her argument, but, once again, she explained how her own ideas introduced a conflict. Alluding to some of the standards she felt were required in school writing, she explained that she had to find a way to eliminate any trace of personal reasoning in her paper, even though this very reasoning had laid the groundwork for her claims.

> **Kiesha:** *You know, I don't want to use I. So it made me shy away from a lot of my overall opinion about racism, how I saw these two theories.* This is--a paper I had written before had I, I, I a lot.
> Q: And did she say something about it?
> **Kiesha:** Yeah. Like we had spoke to her before in class about that and she said we, *I guess one of the major rules in English and in-- of knowing English-- is the I.*
> Q: That you don't use I.
> **Kiesha:** Don't use the I . . . (Kiesha 58-62)

Thus, Kiesha illustrated the vast gulf she perceived between the means of arriving at a conclusion, which she saw as appropriately subjective, and the means of demonstrating it in

writing, which she saw as preferably objective. This may help us understand why the personal examples she used to understand and evaluate the concepts (and which may have helped her flesh out her warrants) were not used to illustrate concepts in her text:

> **Q:** So your own ideas are coming into play to help you understand--
> **A:** Mm hmm.
> **Q:** --stuff in your own life. Although it doesn't show up in the paper, it affected--
> **Kiesha:** Only because I thought we couldn't. It was coming out 'I,' you know?
> **Q:** Right.
> **Kiesha:** And I didn't have the time, *and I do lack the experience in working around the I. That's why I left it out.* (Kiesha 73-78)

Kiesha herself recognized that her concepts might have been better defined and explained with the use of personal examples. She seemed to sense that she might be able to integrate her experience by relating it more closely to Ellis, showing the relationship between Ellis and herself, but she was not sure how to make these connections for a reader, so decided to leave them out:

> **Kiesha:** And that took away from a lot of ideas that I had. I think the paper would have been much better. I'd have, I'm not crazy about this. *But I think my paper would have been much better if I could have put my experiences in there and knew how to use it around the I thing. Because I'm just trying to look at it from their point of view. Here we have three analysts looking at racism, and we have a person who has to live racism, whereas I live it too. So I have my opinion of how it is to be with, as I told you before, with Ellis.* And difficult to separate us because, and even he says we're right on the same pole. You know at the bottom level. But only we're a step down. And so when he's struggling and feeling frustrated, you know he's been standing on us, keeping us down, and we're just as, I mean even more so frustrated. *And I wanted to like make that relation in there, but I didn't know how to do it.* (Kiesha, 94)

Kiesha felt she could express some of her own opinions in the last paragraph, but when discussing that paragraph she lamented:

> **Kiesha:** And that's what it sounds like, it sounds like you're writing this paper that's perfectly logical, then at the end you're getting emotional, bla bla bla bla bla, you know. And I didn't like it. It's like nothing I said at the end would really justify, had any credit to hold up to the rest. Because *I had to wait and just stuff it somewhere at the end, whereas it should have been distributed throughout the paper.* (Kiesha, 108)

Elizabeth's goals: Organizing the source texts

Elizabeth appeared to be constructing a very different kind of task than Kiesha. Whereas Kiesha had emphasized personal experience, setting the goal to understand racism in her own life, Elizabeth's approach was more text-centered: to be organized, to compare Ellis with the theories, to provide support, and to check for grammatical errors. Focused less on the data of experience and more on the assigned source data, she was especially concerned about meeting the conventions of academic writing, mentioning both local text conventions ("checking mistakes") and more global concerns ("organization"). This text-based focus was also apparent as Elizabeth discussed the general purpose of the assignment. She emphasized use of the source texts, "To make sure you understand them. That's the way of testing, almost," and she again alluded to organization: "And to learn how to set up a paper that way " (Elizabeth, 44 and 46).

It is not surprising that Elizabeth's goals were more text-centered than experience centered, for earlier in the semester, her original approach to the in-class essay (this was norming essay 4) had been failed by 11 of the 12 reviewers. As her norming essay was discussed in class, the instructor had given her strong signals about accountability to the sources and about meeting the organizational conventions expected by the review board:

> . . .What may have saved your paper [the norming essay] is if you'd interacted more with the text as you went.
>
> (and later)
>
> If you have to err on one side or the other. . . it's better to err on the side of being too safe and doing the boring report than it is to err on the side of being too creative. (Class, 4/6)

Although Kiesha and Elizabeth faced the same assignment and audience, they defined a different task for themselves based on their investment in understanding racism on a personal level, their ongoing interaction with their readers, and the ways in which they imagined these readers would respond. Elizabeth was quite concerned about her poor performance on the norming essay, and her frustration with these standards emerged frequently in her interview. Kiesha, on the other hand, seemed more relaxed about conventions and more concerned with getting her ideas out on the page. She joked about her frequent misspellings and typos, but explained that this was just a first draft, so her teacher had said not to worry about it.

Elizabeth's strategies: Choosing a well-structured theory

Elizabeth's thesis centered on the theory of Gordon Allport: "Allport's group theories cover almost all of the changes C. P. went through." In the body of her argument, she narrated the changes Ellis had undergone and, at each turning point, she attempted to interject Allport's concepts of ingroups, reference groups, and marginality to explain Ellis's change in affiliations. Her paper ended:

> The more C. P. worked with Ann and the other people he always hated the more he became aware of the fact that they were just like him . . . . he transformed himself into the person he always searched for, himself. (Elizabeth's draft)

As Elizabeth explained her choice of Allport, it became apparent that her thesis was not informed by personal preference or experience but by the desire to produce an organized essay. She used the narrative structure provided by Ellis's interview. The neatness of this organized approach appealed to her, for it meant that she did not have to create an organizational structure of her own:

> **Elizabeth:** . . . *One of the reasons that I used Allport was because his theories were kind of clear cut if you used [them] group by group, so I figured I'd be able to stay, keep more organization by sticking to one group at a time for each paragraph*, and then--
> **Q:** So Allport gave you a way to organize C. P. Ellis?
> **Elizabeth:** An organized way of understanding him, yeah. That I, *I thought Allport gave his theories in a way that he described it enough that I wouldn't have to put so much of my own input in, because I found once I start to put my own input in, it gets disorganized.* (Elizabeth, 20-22)

Elizabeth pointed out several places in the text where she had provided key support. She took a chronological approach, starting with Ellis's childhood:

> While going from childhood to manhood C.P. searched for himself and his sense of belonging. He left school every day with a sense of inferiority.

When asked where this support had come from, she explained, "It stated that in the book."(53) Elizabeth appeared to work closely from Ellis's life story, attempting to explain his affiliations with Allport's concepts.

> **Elizabeth:** ... He just felt inferior and was looking for a place to belong in. And that's when I thought, when you have negative feelings of inferiority is, that's when you--
> **Q:** Yea--
> **Elizabeth:** When you have the negative feelings is when you would change groups, because you're no longer comfortable, so that's when I started thinking of the groups. (Elizabeth 57-59)

The connections she made between these events and concepts, however, were not articulated clearly in her text. The support she provided clearly focused on examples from Ellis, but only alluded to Allport's concepts. This is true of the following piece of support she identified, which foregrounded Ellis's transition, but only alluded to Allport's concepts of outgroups and ingroups. At no point in the text had she defined either of these ideas for the reader:

> He walked away from the council meetings while continuing to hate the blacks. Until one day he met a black man and talked to him eye to eye. He was surprised to find out that this black man that belonged to the outgroup he hated was so much like himself. After this revelation C.P. found he wasn't so comfortable with his in group. (The Klan.)

In this third piece of support, the connection between marginality and Ellis is unclear:

> C.P. didn't completely understand how he ended up where he found himself, but he accepted his place. He was tired of fighting. At this point he was in a marginal group, not exactly out of one or completely in another. The more he worked with Ann and the people he always hated the more he became aware of the fact that they were just like him

Thus, although Elizabeth attended carefully to organization and examples from the sources, she failed to elaborate connections and inferences that might help the reader see the relationship between Ellis's experience and Allport's theoretical concepts. These gaps in Elizabeth's warrants are obvious in Figure 9, which maps out the structure of her argument. In addition to underelaborated warrants, this figure reveals what appears to be irrelevant support. Elizabeth included a paragraph on Loewenberg's concept of projection, which is not clearly related to her thesis. The figure also indicates some missing support. Given that Elizabeth had qualified her thesis, claiming that Allport covers *almost* all the changes Ellis experienced, we would expect her to provide examples that were *not* accounted for by parts or all of Ellis's theory. While the preceding analysis of Elizabeth's goals and strategies

cannot account for these missing and irrelevant features of her argument, we can begin to understand these patterns by looking closely at the alternatives and conflicts she recognized and the ways in which she negotiated them in light of her goals.

Elizabeth's negotiation of conflict

Although Elizabeth was able to work Allport into the organization that the Ellis interview had provided, her decision to use Allport alone introduced a conflict, for she realized that the other theorists did apply to some aspects of his life. Elizabeth felt some obligation to consider these theorists, for she had recognized the goal to compare all three of the theories to Ellis. Her attempt to integrate Loewenberg into her text disrupted her tidy narrative and her plan to use Allport "group by group," however, and she had difficulty producing the transitions that might have connected the concept of projection to Ellis's membership in an ingroup—the Klan. Here, she expressed her frustration with this problem, noting the difficulty of smoothly integrating this idea into her text.

> **Elizabeth:** . . .It helped you understand why people did it, why people felt the way they did. *But I don't know if that was the correct way that it should have been in there.*
> **Q:** Yeah, I noticed that, that you were talking about Allport and then Loewenberg kind of came in so that you could define what projection was.
> **Elizabeth:** *See I thought I probably should have moved it up. I probably will move it up in my final copy.*
> **Q:** Move it up into your thesis statement, you mean?
> **Elizabeth:** *Yea, but I didn't know how to fit it in there, and I didn't want them to think this was about Loewenberg, because it wasn't.* (Elizabeth, 26-30)

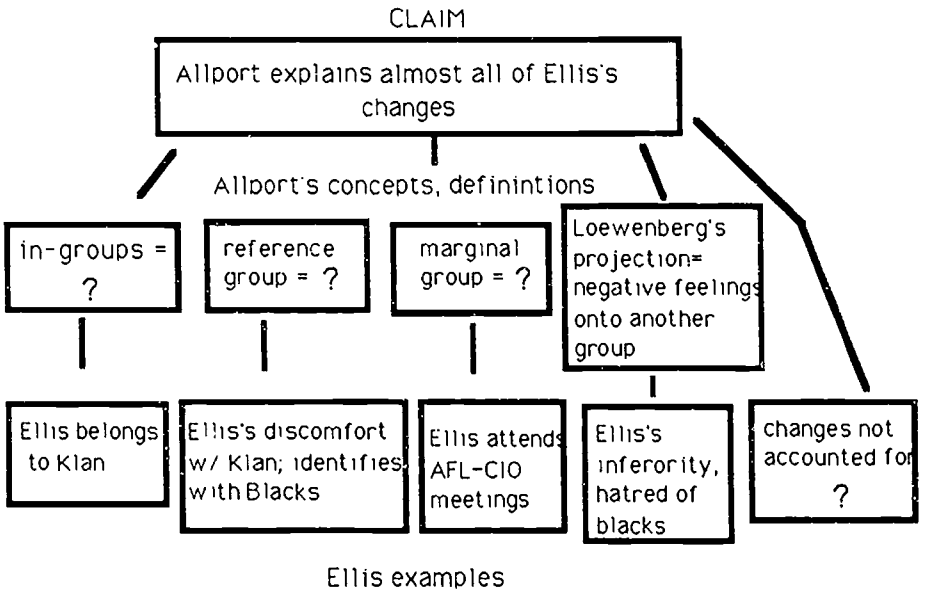

FIGURE 9: STRUCTURE OF ELIZABETH'S ARGUMENT

Even though Elizabeth recognized that this integration of Loewenberg's concepts might have helped to elaborate and explain some of Allport's ideas, she felt that these concepts would complicate her text in a way she could not manage. The addition of Loewenberg and Boggs, it seemed, would require more organizational restructuring and, subsequently, more logical transitions. Uncertain about her ability to connect this complicated web of concepts in an organized way, she opted to exclude them, again illustrating her overriding concern with organization.

> **Q:** So you started to reread it and started to see that maybe Boggs applied too?
> **Elizabeth:** Other people were. *And then I started thinking I can't use all them though. I'd rather have them help me explain [Allport], but I would have been too confusing.*
> (Elizabeth, 118-119)

Although Elizabeth's choice of Allport alone simplified the structure of her text, it introduced a conflict that arose from her own experiences with racism in the south. She believed that racist individuals sometimes managed to hide their feelings, but that they never really changed. She noted that the theorists couldn't account for where Ellis's hatred went or how it had dissipated:

> **Elizabeth:**. . . . *I thought, the hate was never real if you understand some of those theories, so then it could be gone because it was never there in the first place, in reality. But hate is hate, and I just think he still hates to some extent. And where did it go?*
> **Q:** Then the theories can't really--
> **Elizabeth:** How can you just go from a group and, oh they're thinking more, they don't disgust me any more or, just all the things that used to disgust you about them isn't there any more. . .
> **Q:** So in a way you wanted to change, you thought that would be more interesting to write about?
> **Elizabeth:** Yeah, but *I'm having a hard time because there isn't anything in those theories to support me.*
> **Q:** Right, right. So what would you--
> **Elizabeth:** So I wanted to do it, open it up with where did it[the hate] go, work my way through it through the groups, and then, at the end, give my own idea and say, okay if [Ellis] did go in and out of the groups, where did he drop off the luggage? On his way in and out of the group he had to keep taking some [hate] in with him.
> **Q:** *So you can say, to some extent Allport explains C. P. Ellis' movement from these groups?*
> **Elizabeth:** *But not his emotions.*
> **Q:** . . . but on the other hand he doesn't explain what happens to--
> **Elizabeth:** Not his emotions, I don't think it does. (Elizabeth, 127-137)

This glimpse of the thinking that occurred behind the scenes of Elizabeth's text has shed light on her qualified thesis, for she clearly had identified an aspect of Ellis's racism for which Allport's theory did not account—emotion. But why hadn't she explained this weakness or supported this qualification further in her text? And why had she attempted to defend a position she was not committed to? As the following excerpt reveals, Elizabeth chose to exclude these ideas because she feared that they would interfere with the strict organization expected by the review board:

> **Q:** . . .Why did, why do you not include this?
> **Elizabeth:** I didn't start getting that where did it all go till the end of this paper when I was writing it. And *I didn't have time to reorganize the whole thing.* But I think that's how I would like to go about the next one.
> **Q:** Your second draft.

Elizabeth: Yeah. *But I worried about doing that because sometimes I'm afraid if I change my whole idea I'm just going to screw up the whole paper and lose my idea of what I was doing in the first place.*
Q: So it's a thing about focusing and organizing again and you'd be afraid--
Elizabeth: *If I was writing the paper for [teacher] to read, period, I would do it my way, no problem. But knowing I have to do it in strict organization, and have it all make sense, holds me back.* (Elizabeth, 129-145)

Compromising her own beliefs was a very difficult choice for Elizabeth. In discussing the difficulties of the task, she said, quite emphatically, "I hated it"(169), explaining:

Elizabeth: *Because I had to use the book so much. If I could just take my own ideas, take part of the thing, and then put my own ideas with it and explain it, I have a better time doing that, than the books. I always feel like I see things different than the books say. So it contradicts everything ....*
Q: So in a way it would have been easier to use this idea that you had. Not to talk about C. P. Ellis and what he really--
Elizabeth: I would have had a easier time with that. I'm just confused with some options. I mean do you really believe somebody can do that, I mean in real life. If you really think about it, you know he's real prejudiced, against any group.
Q: So it made it hard, what she was asking you...
Elizabeth: *To do something I didn't believe.*
Q: Okay, and to--
Elizabeth: *It's like explaining god to an atheist. Like, tell us why you believe in god to an atheist. It's like I don't believe it so how can I?* (Elizabeth, 171-177)

Elizabeth was so convinced that her ideas had merit, that she began to produce a running personal draft and set of notes alongside the one she handed in, which she shared with us. In her notes, Elizabeth began to connect her own idea—that Ellis was only using blacks for his own economic gain—to Boggs' theory, giving her a way to use the sources. But these connections remained unclear; she produced a list of objections, questions and claims about his motivation that were not integrated or organized in an coherent way. The draft she began was also a series of assertions that appeared to be pasted together but not logically connected. Eventually, Elizabeth abandoned the idea. Her second draft remained largely unchanged, with only local corrections. Asked later why she hadn't used these ideas, she again reiterated the difficulty of working her own ideas in with the source texts.

In sum, these writers perceived alternatives in their approach to this task, and they made choices in light of personal values and knowledge as well as their expectations about the review board, the teacher, and their own capabilities. Kiesha's goal was self-discovery; she saw the assignment as an opportunity to understand racism in her own life, and thus her own experiences with racism rather than C.P. Ellis's experiences became the initial test case for the theories. She used the theoretical concepts to address racism as a personal problem and only then turned to Ellis for support. Elizabeth, facing what appeared to be the "same" task, constructed a different set of goals. Even though she too had strong feelings about racism, her experience with the previous assignment and her concern about her own ability to integrate the sources led her away from the data of personal experience. She turned to a single source text as a way to simplify the organization of her argument.

Both Kiesha and Elizabeth illustrated that argument construction does not proceed in a linear fashion. Both writers had to negotiate conflicts and alternatives that arose in the goals

they perceived and the strategies they used. Their goals and strategies were revised and reshaped during argumentation, and understanding these conflicts and negotiations helped to explain certain patterns that appeared in their texts.

These students' choices and negotiations often centered around the dichotomy they had created between their own knowledge and the source texts. This perceived dichotomy influenced their texts in a number of ways. For one, both students seemed hesitant to use the wealth of inferences and personal connections they had made in reading as text elaboration and warranting that might have helped their readers understand the concepts they presented and the way in which the concepts were related to their discussion of racism. Kiesha's belief that she could not use personal pronouns or personal examples in the text must have introduced an enormous constraint, for the conclusions she wanted to present in the paper had been developed almost exclusively out of personal associations and experiences. Elizabeth seemed aware that she needed to explain the concepts more, but felt that she had to use other source texts to do so. And yet this disrupted the tidy organizational frame that the use of a single source text had afforded her.

Finally, we saw these writers struggling to make concessions and meet the demands of the often competing goals they recognized. Elizabeth grew uncomfortable with presenting an argument she did not believe and so attempted to test her true feelings out in a separate draft. Kiesha noted that the sterile theories of Allport which seemed to have no relevance to her own experience, actually might help account for Ellis's racism. In that she recognized that this too was a goal for the paper, she added a few brief sentences on Allport, thus making a concession to this goal while still staying true to her own experiences. Thus what seem like anomalies and gaps that appeared in students texts were made more understandable in looking at their evolving representations of this task.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we have introduced a framework for building a constructive theory of argument. Specifically, our aim has been to understand and account for the process by which individuals create claims and develop reasons for those claims. Towards this end, we began with a brief assessment of two traditions in argument scholarship, logical theory and rhetorical theory, both of which are inadequate for describing the constructive processes that underlie argument composition. Logic has focused mainly on the reception of arguments rather than on the production of them. Although useful for understanding a limited set of arguments such as those found in mathematics, logic has been less useful for describing how individuals shape reasoning in everyday contexts of argument. In contrast, rhetorical theory acknowledges the situational, provisional nature of argument. Classical theories of argument are, however, limited in their ability to describe a wide spectrum of argument situations, and provide no framework for describing individual perception. Although contemporary field theorists have been able to capture patterns of reasoning in a wider array of argument fields, they have not attempted to account for variations in individual reasoning within specific fields. This is largely because the field metaphor has been used to document pockets of rationality—those standards, facts, and procedures associated with the texts in particular communities and which may be used to assess arguments in those communities.

This study has complicated the notion of an argument field (often described in terms of semantic and syntactic patterns) first, by arguing that a field of argument is not a static entity

(even though the categories that describe it may appear so); rather, people argue in the context of situations, encompassing cognitive, social, and material transactions in real time. Although *potential* resources for arguing may become available to arguers in a given situation, these resources are never given, nor are they stable. In this study, the writers' interlocutors—the reviewers and instructor— recognized similar standards for academic argument; yet they modified their criteria for this assignment, given their prior experience with similar students and the short amount of time in which they had to teach academic writing. The instructor revised her expectations for academic argument, emphasizing the use of sources and development of positive support and de-emphasizing rival hypotheses and counterargument. And writers themselves recognized that the instructor and reviewers placed different values on the use of personal information.

By observing nine writers at work, we have seen that influential features of an argument situation are not limited to social cues and material resources but also the writer's prior knowledge, values, cultural experience, and personal goals, which may or may not coincide with what others value and expect in an argument situation. In this study, personal knowledge and experience had an enormous influence on the process of some writers. The knowledge used for argument is not static and does not reside in the writer nor in some larger, determining context. Rather, knowledge for argument is constructed *in situ* —arising out of an interaction of social and personal knowledge and manifesting itself in a writer's interpretation of the task and her unique development of propositions and support. When we accept that knowledge for argument is *constructed* out of a unique combination of personal, material and social resources rather than presupposed, then and only then can we account for the kind individual differences in reasoning that are seen in texts like Kiesha's and Elizabeth's.

This framework and the study itself have pointed to constructive sites in argument composition, particularly the development of goals that serve as relevance principles for selecting claims and evidence, the elaboration of supporting ideas and warrants in both reading for and writing an argument, and the negotiation of conflict in a writer's emerging plans and text. The degree to which a writer must construct knowledge via strategies of selecting, connecting, and organizing claims and evidence is never entirely predictable We cannot assume the type and level of constructive activity a writer will engage in simply by assessing the formality of the field or the writer's level of expertise. Although all of these students were novices and had little experience with academic argument, we saw them engaging in different levels of construction. In some cases, students chose to use the text structure and limited set of goals provided by the teacher, avoiding the need to construct or adapt new text structures and strategies. Some constructed more complex representations of the task, not only setting goals that had been communicated to them by the instructor, but personal goals as well, even though they were aware of the conflicts and risks these goals introduced. Writers who recognized conflicts and attempted to accommodate multiple goals engaged in higher levels of constructive activity, searching for alternative methods and developing their own principles for selecting supporting material. They found that the neat text structures the teacher had provided no longer seemed appropriate when new goals and personal ideas were introduced into the text, and they searched for alternative conventions and structures that could help them resolve these problems. They did not always succeed. Some students dropped competing personal goals rather than attempting to construct new strategies or text structures that might help them meet competing demands. Some simply chose to ignore conflict, handing in texts that included blatant contradictions or gaps in reasoning. These negotiation strategies helped account for differences found in their texts.

Using the constructive framework to study school-based argument also enabled us to redefine the difficulties students face as they attempt academic argument tasks. These students' difficulties often emerged as they attempted to negotiate a set of personal goals that were sometimes at odds with the requirements they perceived in the course. The greatest conflict arose between the goals to learn and practice a specific set of writing conventions, to use the required sources, and to integrate their own ideas. The patterns that emerged in these writers' texts —underelaborated or missing warrants, missing and irrelevant support, and unqualified claims—were better understood when examining the range of goals and strategies writers had constructed in their reading and planning and the way in which they had negotiated conflicts and alternatives in these goals and strategies. From the texts alone, we might speculate, as Stein (1990) has, that students fail to elaborate ideas because they devalue their own thinking or may not be aware of the need for elaboration in text. But upon close examination of students' goals and negotiations, we saw that these students took their own ideas quite seriously. Moreover, they also seemed to recognize the need to elaborate evidence in the sources. Students seemed to control certain uses of elaboration (e.g., in text comprehension), but had difficulty translating and managing this personal knowledge when putting their arguments on paper. To some extent, these difficulties were related to their sometimes accurate perceptions that personal ideas could be risky in this context, that they might lead them away from the sources or create additional concerns with organization.

This portrait of negotiation points to particular areas in which instructors might attempt to help students translate and use their own ideas. The most difficult challenge for some students was figuring out specific ways to integrate personal knowledge with assigned sources. It might be useful to model legitimate ways of harnessing personal knowledge for argument tasks in school, demonstrating that students' personal associations and examples generated in reading have great potential for helping students define for readers those source ideas presented in their texts. Students might be surprised to learn that personal analogies and examples might be quite acceptable for defining terms and fleshing out warrants. Although the text templates that we sometimes provide our students can prompt them to use and organize ideas in writing, we saw that these templates may not be particularly useful for students with more complex representations of an argument task, for these templates do not easily accommodate counterarguments, rival hypotheses and personal knowledge. Students may need to experiment with ways to adapt the five paragraph theme to this end.

Finally, the methodology suggested by the framework is quite useful when the goal is to describe how individuals construct arguments. When students were asked to explicitly reflect on their goals, strategies, and conflicts, a great deal of metacognitive knowledge came into view. This knowledge may have been hard to capture with texts or protocols alone. In addition to retrospective interviews focusing on writers' decisions in reading, planning, and composing an argument over time, we used converging forms of observation—field notes, analyses of readers' expectations, and text analysis. This combination of methods produced a portrait not only of arguers, but of the situation in which they wrote. It also illustrated that, in theorizing about the process of argument, we should not assume that the context itself determines an arguer's reasoning, that the reasoning process can be described apart from the context in which it occurs, or that writers' texts alone reflect their reasoning process.

Appendix A: Background Interview Questions

1. When you hear the term "argument," what does it mean to you? What does the term, "persuasive writing" mean to you? Are these two things the same, or is there a difference?

2. Now we're going to discuss some examples of how you have used writing to argue in different situations. Give me a typical example of when you have used writing to argue outside the classroom. What was the SITUATION; what did your AUDIENCE expect; what did YOU expect? What STEPS did you take to think through and plan your writing? How did you SUPPORT your argument? Why? What kinds of STANDARDS did your audience use to evaluate this argument. What features made it a good argument in their view; which features made it weak?

3. Why did you use writing, rather than talking, as a way to argue in this situation? In what ways was writing easier or harder?

4. Give me a typical example in which you used writing as a way to argue in school. What was the SITUATION; what did your TEACHER expect you to do? What did YOU want to accomplish? Explain the STEPS you took to think it through and write it. How did you SUPPORT your argument? Why? What kinds of STANDARDS did your teacher use to evaluate this argument; that is, what features made it a good argument in her/his view; which made it weak?

5. Do these two examples of written argument (school vs. non-school) differ in any way? How so? Have you learned anything about argument in school that might help with your writing out of school, or vice-versa?

6. How much persuasive writing have you done in school? In which classes? If you had to give a less experienced student advice about how to write an argument for a class, what tips would you give her, based on what you have been taught about argument in school?

Appendix B: Instructor's Interview Questions

1. Although you have a number of goals in this writing course, one of those goals is to help students with school-based argument. In class, you have continually stressed the importance of a thesis and support in writing persuasive college essays. In this assignment, you ask students to argue from and about the source materials. In terms of thesis and support, a) what are you looking for in the paper? b) how do you expect them to use the source materials and their own ideas on the topic? and c) what are the most important criteria for evaluating these papers?

2. (While reading students' draft) At the end of each paragraph, please record your response to the student's claims and use of evidence and source materials. You may then add any other response or comment, if you wish.

Appendix C: Retrospective Interview Questions

1. What are the most important things this assignment asks you to do? Name five things the teacher will look for in your essay.

2. How did you address each of those expectations (specific things you tried to do)?

3. What was your purpose in writing this paper; what did you hope to accomplish? What's the purpose of this kind of writing in school; why did your teacher assign it?

4. What is the thesis you supported in this paper? I'd like to discuss the ways you supported this thesis. Can you underline three important places in the essay where you provide evidence or support for your thesis?

5. (For each supportive idea)

   a) Where did this support come from? Could I find this idea anywhere else; for example, is it something from the articles you read, is it from the notes you took in class or from your reading, or did you think of it as you wrote the paper?

   b) How did you find or think up this support; how and when did you decide on this evidence?

   c) How convincing is this piece of support? How and why does it support your thesis?

6. What is the strongest support for your conclusion and why? What is the weakest and why?

7. Did you come across or think of any evidence against your thesis or any information that might support a different evaluation of these theories? If so, how did you handle this when writing the paper?

8. How did your own ideas, experiences, or opinions about racism come into play as you thought about and wrote this argument?

9. Was this a hard assignment? What made it easy or difficult for you?

REFERENCES

Applebee, A. N. (1984). *Contexts for learning to write*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Aristotle. (1982). *The "art" of rhetoric*. J. H. Freese, trans. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1987). *The psychology of written communication*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bitzer, L. F. (1980). Functional communication: A situational perspective. In E. E. White, *Rhetoric in transition: Studies in the nature and uses of rhetoric*. State College, PA: Penn State University Press.

Boole, G. (1951). *An investigation of the laws of thought, on which are founded the mathematical theories of logic and probabilities*. New York: Dover.

Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher, 18* (1), 32-42.

Bruffee, K. A. (1984). Collaborative learning and the "conversation of mankind". *College English, 46*, 635-652.

Chi, M., P. Feltovich & R. Glaser. (1981). Categorization and representation of physics problems by experts and novices. *Cognitive Science, 5*, 121-152.

Clark, R. A. & Delia, J. (1979). Topoi and rhetorical competence. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 65*,187-206.

Collins, A., Brown, A., & Larkin, K. (1980). Inference in text understanding. In R. Spiro, B. Bruce & W. Brewer (Eds.), *Theoretical issues in reading comprehension*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Columbo, G., R. Cullen and B. Lisle (Eds.). (1989). *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Corbett, E. P. J. (1971). *Classical rhetoric for the modern student*.. New York: Oxford University Press.

Crowhurst, M. (1991). Interrelationships between reading and writing persuasive discourse. *Research in the Teaching of English, 25*, 314-338.

Delia, R. & O'Keefe, B. (1979). Constructivism: The development of communication in children. In E. Wartella (Ed.), *Children Communicating: Sage annual reviews of communication research*. Vol. 2. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Durst, R. (1989). Monitoring processes in analytic and summary writing. *Written Communication, 6* , 340-363.

Fahnestock, J. & M. Secor. (1982). A rhetoric of argument. New York: Random House.

Flavell, J. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist , 34* (10), 906-911.

Flower, L. (1988). The construction of purpose in writing and reading. *College English, 50,* 528-550.

Flower, L. (1989). Cognition, context and theory building. *College Composition and Communication, 40*, 282-311.

Flower, L. (1994). *The construction of negotiated meaning: A social cognitive theory of writing*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Flower, L., Hayes, J. R., L. Carey, L., Schriver, K.A., & Stratman, J. (1986). Detection, diagnosis, and the strategies of revision.*College Composition and Communication, 37*, 16-55.

Flower, L., Schriver, K. A., Carey, L., Haas, C., & Hayes, J. R. (1989). Planning in writing: The cognition of a constructive process. In Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Writing at University of California, Berkeley and Carnegie Mellon.

Flower, L., Stein, V., Ackerman, J., Kantz, M. J., McCormick, K., & Peck, W. C. (1990). *Reading-to-write: Exploring a cognitive and social process*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punishment: The birth of the prison.* A. Sheridan, trans. New York: Vintage Books.

Freedman, S. W. (1987). *Response to student writing*. Urbana, IL: National Council for Teachers of English.

Garner, R. (1987). *Metacognition and reading comprehension.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Gentner, D. (1983). Structure-mapping: A theoretical framework for analogy. *Cognitive Science, 7*, 155-170.

Giroux, H. (1988). *Schooling and the struggle for public life.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gronbeck, B. E. (1985). Sociocultural notions of argument fields: A primer. In Cox, J., Sillars, M., & Walker, G. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 4th SCA/AFA conference on argumentation*. Washington, D.C.: SCA

Haas, C. (1987). *How the writing medium shapes the writing process: Studies of writers composing with pen and paper and with word processing*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation in rhetoric. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University.

Higgins, L., Flower, L., & Petraglia, J. (1992). Planning text together: The role of critical reflection in student collaboration. *Written Communication, 9,* 48-84.

Johnstone, H. W. (1978). From philosophy to rhetoric and back. In D. M. Burks (Ed.), *Rhetoric, philosophy, and Literature: An Exploration* (pp. 49-66). West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

Kaufer, D., Geisler, C., & Neuwirth, C. (1989). *Arguing from sources: Exploring issues through reading and writing*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace, & Jovanovich.

Knuepper, C. (1981). Argument Fields: Some social constructivist observations. In G. Ziegelmueller & J. Rhodes (Eds.) *Dimensions of argument: Proceedings of the second summer conference on argumentation,* pp. 80-87. Annondale, VA: Speech Communication Association.

Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolution* s(2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Langer, J. (1980). Relation between levels of prior knowledge and the organization of recall. In M. Kamil & A. J. Moe (Eds.), *Perspectives in reading research and instruction*. Washington, DC: National Reading Conference.

Langer, J. A. (1984). Effects of topic knowledge on the quality and coherence of informational writing. In A. N. Applebee (Eds.), *Contexts for learning to write*. (pp. 135-148). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Langer, J. A. (1986). Reading, writing, and understanding: An analysis of the construction of meaning. *Written Communication, 3*, 219-267.

Lave, J. (1988). *Cognition in practice: Mind, mathematics and culture in everyday life.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Le Fevre, K. (1987) *Invention as a social act.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Lunsford, A., & L. Ede. (1986). Why write. . .together: A research update. *Rhetoric Review, 5(1),* 71-81.

McKerrow, R. (1989, March). Argument fields. Paper presented at the Annual Conference on College Composition and Communication, Seattle, WA.

Nelson, J. (1988). *Examining the practices that shape student writing: Two studies of college freshmen writing across the disciplines*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Carnegie Mellon University. Pittsburgh, PA.

Norman, D. (1980). What goes on in the mind of the learner. In W. J. McKeachie (Ed.), *Cognition and college teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Nystrand, M. (1989). A social-interactive model of writing. *Written Communication, 6,* 66-85.

O' Keefe, B. & Delia, J. (1979). Construct comprehensiveness and cognitive complexity as predictors of the number of and strategic adaptation of arguments and appeals in a persuasive message. *Communication Monographs, 46,* 231-241.

O'Keefe, D. J. (1977). Two concepts of argument. *Journal of the American Forensic Association,13* , 121-128.

Ohmann, R. (1985). *Reading and writing, work and leisure.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Perelman, Ch. & Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. (1969). *The new rhetoric: A treatise on argumentation.* Trans. J. Wilkinson & P. Weaver. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Perkins, D. (1981). *The mind's best work.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Piche, G. L. & Roen, D. (1987). Social cognition and writing: Interpersonal cognitive complexity and abstractness and the quality of students' persuasive writing. *Written Communication, 4* (1), 68-89.

Porter, J. E. (1986). Intertextuality and the discourse community. *Rhetoric Review, 5,* 34-47.

Reder, L. M. (1980). The role of elaboration in the comprehension and retention of prose: A critical review. *Review of Educational Research, 50,* 5-53.

Reder, L. M., Charney, D. H., & Morgan, K. I. (1986). The role of elaborations in learning a skill from an instructional text. *Memory and Cognition, 14,* 64-78.

Rowland, R. C. (1985). Argument fields. In J. Cox, M. Sillars, & G. Walker (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 4th SCA/AFA conference on argumentation.* Washington, DC: SCA

Rowland, R. C. (1982). The influence of purpose on fields of argument. *Journal of the American Forensic Association, 18,* 228-245.

Rubin, D. L. & Rafoth, B. A. (1986). Social cognitive ability as a predictor of the quality of expository and persuasive writing among college freshman. *Research in the Teaching of English, 20* (1), 9-21.

Spivey, N. N. (1990). Transforming texts: Constructive processes in reading and writing. *Written Communication, 7(2),* 256-287.

Stein, V. (1992). How we begin to remember: Elaboration, task and the transformation of knowledge. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Carnegie Mellon University. Pittsburgh, PA.

Stein, V. (1990). Elaboration: Using what you know. In L.Flower, V. Stein, J. Ackerman, M. J. Kantz, K. McCormick, & W. C. Peck. (1990). *Reading-to-write· Exploring a cognitive and social process*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sitko, B. (1989). Writers' cognitive and decision processes: Revising after feedback. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Carnegie Mellon University. Pittsburgh, PA

Spiro, R., Feltovich, P., Coulson, R., & Anderson, D. (1989). Multiple analogies for complex concepts: Antidotes for analogy-induced misconception in advanced knowledge acquisition. In S. Vosniadou & A. Ortony, *Similarity and analogical reasoning* (pp 498-531). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press .

Swales, J. (1984). Research into the structure of introductions to journal articles and its application to the teaching of academic writing. In R. Williams, J. Swales, & J. Kirkman (Eds.), *Common ground: Shared interests in ESP and communications studies* (pp. 77-86). Oxford: Pergamon.

Toulmin, S. (1972). *Human Understanding*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Toulmin, S. (1958). *The uses of argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Toulmin, S., Rieke, R., & Janik, A. (1984). *An introduction to reasoning (2nd Edition)* New York: MacMillan.

Voss, J. F., Greene, T. R., Post, T. A., & Penner, B. C. (1983). Problem solving skills in the social sciences. In G. Bower (Eds.), *The psychology of learning and motivation: Advances in research and theory*.New York: Academic Press.

Voss, J., F. Tyler, S.W., & Yengo, L. A. (1983). Individual differences in the solving of social science problems. In *Individual differences in cognition ,Vol. 1* (pp 205-232). New York: Academic Press

Wasson, P.C. & Johnson-Laird, P. N. (1972). *Psychology of reasoning: Structure and content*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Willard, C. A. (1983). *Argumentation and the social grounds of knowledge*. University of Alabama: University of Alabama Press.

Young, R. (1978). Paradigms and problems: Needed research in rhetorical invention In C. R. Cooper & L. Odell (Eds.) *Research on composing: Points of departure* (pp. 29-47). Urbana, IL: National Council for Teachers of English.

Young, R., Becker. A, & Pike, K. (1970). *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.